

Royal College of Nursing Policies

<p>Document Name: Policy: Safety and Conduct at RCN Events</p>
<p>Purpose of Document: This policy supports the safety of participants at RCN Events in relation to conduct and behaviour.</p>
<p>Committees, Groups, Meetings to which this policy applies: The policy applies to all participants in RCN events including, but not limited to, members, delegates, staff, volunteers, speakers, contractors, exhibitors, and sponsors.</p>
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<p>Circulated for comment and input to: Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager – Jill Thornton Associate Director People & OD – Liz Laughton GMB Branch Secretary – Lin Ryan GMB Lead Health & Safety Rep – Deborah Haynes Events and Venue Service Manager – Steve Jenkinson Corporate Relations Manager – Julie Ballard Business Director – Andy Cowan Diversity and Equalities Co-ordinator – Bruno Daniels Director England – Patricia Marquis Previous Director POD – Steve Mason Customer Relations Manager – Jo Lewis Director RCNi – Rachel Armitage Director RCNF – Deepa Korea</p> <p>RCN Health & Safety Committee (30 March 2023) RCN Executive Team (4 April 2023) RCN Council (11 to 19 April 2023)</p>
<p>Description of Policy The RCN supports and promotes a culture of reciprocal respect and will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or any form of misconduct across all our activities. This policy sets out the approach to this specifically in relation to events. The policy includes a specific Code of Conduct for RCN Events. This was a recommendation by Bruce Carr KC in his report on culture in the RCN (2022).</p>

The policy has also been developed following recommendations made because of investigations of incidents at previous RCN events.

This is an RCN policy currently with a view to developing it as a Group policy later in 2023.

Other RCN policies that must be considered in conjunction with this policy:

RCN Respect Charter
RCN Code of Conduct

Members

Regulation: RCN Council, board and committee members – fit and proper persons criteria

Conflicts of interest/gifts and hospitality policy (members) *[in development]*

Member resolution policy

Staff

Alcohol and drugs policy

Declaring interests policy (including gifts and hospitality policy) (staff)

Health & Safety Management Guidance Note: Health & Safety Considerations for Events and Conferences

Lone worker policy

Managing unacceptable behaviour guidelines

Respect at work policy

Safeguarding guidance

Staff disciplinary Policy

Date policy approved and by whom:

RCN Council 19 April 2023

Date of implementation:

20 April 2023

Date of next review:

20 April 2024 (and then three-yearly)

Department responsible for Review:

Policy, Communications and Marketing (from 2024)

All RCN event organisers and key participants (including RCN staff, Council, board and committee

As an organisation we will:

<p>members, exhibitors, contractors, sponsors, committee members participants) should be provided with a copy of this policy in advance of every event. They should:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarise themselves with this policy and follow it. • Refer to any guidance or legal positions as referenced in the policy. • Understand the approach to safety and conduct at RCN Events • Abide by the rules in the policy and ensure others are aware of them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that this policy and any supporting information and processes are clear and accessible • Identify a team or individual responsible for keeping this policy under review and in line with any relevant updated guidance. • Review and/or audit this policy and associated processes and procedures every 3 years

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The RCN holds a range of in-person, online and hybrid (in-person and online) events such as conferences, awards ceremonies, talks, seminars, webinars, and workshops. It also holds an annual Congress and General Meetings which are open to all members, as well as small events and meetings at branch and local level. This policy applies to all such events and the definition of events is not limited to those described above.
- 1.2 The RCN is committed to providing a safe environment for all participants. The scope of this policy extends to the safety of participants at events in relation to conduct and behaviour including that of a most serious nature. Other aspects of safety are covered by the *RCN's Health & Safety Management Guidance Note: Health & Safety Considerations for Events and Conferences*, as well as broader health & safety policy and legislation.
- 1.3 The RCN supports and promotes a culture of reciprocal respect and will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or any form of misconduct across all our activities. This policy sets out the approach to this specifically in relation to events.

1.4 The policy applies to all participants in RCN events including, but not limited to, delegates, members, staff, volunteers, speakers, contractors, exhibitors, and sponsors. The word “participant” is used throughout this policy as an inclusive term for the sake of brevity.

2 Principles

2.1 The RCN’s three guiding principles in relation to conduct and behaviour are:

- that all participants are kept safe, treated with respect and without disadvantage, and behave accordingly to others
- Anyone who needs to report any incident relating to conduct and behaviour which, in their sincere belief, breaches the above is given suitable means of doing so, is listened to in good faith, their report treated seriously.
- Appropriate and proportionate action will be taken to anyone found to have behaved towards others below the standards expected in the RCN Respect Charter and this policy.

All event arrangements will ensure that the above principles are adhered to. Offsite events are considered an extension of the RCN workplace and all associated activities and behaviours must align with this – see 3.1 below.

3 RCN Responsibilities

3.1 Events and associated activities (such as site visits and travel to and from events) at RCN or external locations are subject to all RCN policies and regulations along with venue policies.

3.2 As part of our responsibilities in organising and running events, as well as the conduct and behaviour issues covered in section 4 the RCN will also ensure that the following aspects are covered:

- Planning – plans for the event will consider how to deal with conduct, behaviour, and the safety of participants in a relevant way for the event. Plans will always include a mechanism for reporting complaints or incidents (see section 6)
- Roles and responsibilities – within such plans the roles of participants are clearly stated, including those who are designated as being available to deal with complaints/incident reporting (see sections 5 and 6 below).

- Co-ordination with external parties such as venue management to ensure arrangements are clear in respect of the safety and conduct of all participants
- Clear communication and provision of proportionate information to all participants, including documentation and briefings, to ensure all are fully aware of arrangements and responsibilities including responsibilities which fall under this policy
- Monitoring and reporting on events, leading to reflection/review and implementing improvements to enable the best possible event experience for all participants.
- Risk assessment, ensuring that all risks associated with the event are properly assessed and appropriately mitigated.
- Equality impact assessed, the event's impact on those with protected characteristics in equality legislation is properly assessed, and reasonable adjustments are made accordingly.
- Ensure the RCN's position on alcohol is clearly understood – as part of our responsibilities to provide a safe environment the RCN policy is that the RCN will not purchase alcohol for participants. For example, there will be no provision by the RCN of alcoholic drinks at receptions or dinners. This position will be clearly communicated when appropriate.
- Consent - consent of participants to being filmed, photographed, or recorded must be obtained beforehand. This can be done by use of appropriate notices in communications prior to and during the event asking participants to inform the organisers if they do not wish to be filmed, recorded, or photographed. Speakers will be invited to provide consent at the point of invitation.
- Incident/complaints reporting – ensure incident/complaints reporting measures are in place and there is a clear process for reporting incidents and complaints at the event.

4 Code of Conduct for RCN Events

- 4.1 Conduct is key to ensuring the safety of all participants as well as the reputation of the RCN.
- 4.2 All participants should behave in a courteous and respectful manner towards others at all times in both social and professional settings at events.

4.3 Participants should abide by the RCN Respect Charter and the RCN Code of Conduct.

4.4 If appropriate participants should also remember their requirement to adhere to the NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council) or other professional regulators' Code of Conduct, the RCN Regulation on Fit and Proper Persons, the RCN Foundation Code of Conduct for Volunteers. Sponsors and exhibitors, if applicable, are reminded of their obligations under the Association of British Pharmaceuticals (ABPI) Code of Practice.

4.5 The RCN takes a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour, incivilities and poor conduct at its events including:

- engaging in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile or degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
- offensive or undermining comments or non-verbal behaviours related to personal characteristics and lifestyle choices.
- excessive consumption of alcohol or other intoxicants leading to professional and appropriate boundaries and behaviours not being maintained
- inappropriate physical contact and unwelcome sexuals attention (physically, verbally or in writing)
- stalking/following including continued communication after a request to cease doing so
- harassing photography or recording
- sustained disruption and noise
- display of sexual or offensive imagery or materials, use of sexualised clothing/uniforms/costumes, use of sexual references, or otherwise creation of a sexualised environment
- threats or incitements of violence
- publication of confidential or sensitive information about other persons present or not.
- consumption or possession of illegal narcotics of any form under any circumstances
- behaviour which compromises health and safety arrangements, putting self and others at risk
- conduct which may seem harmless, well-meant, or humorous but which is not taken as such by others and their objections not respected.
- Deliberate and persistent pressure on staff to "bend rules" or "make exceptions" in policies such as the Expenses policy, for no valid reason.

4.6 Participants who are asked to stop any of the above behaviours (or others not listed) are expected to comply immediately. If they do not, then the actions outline in section 5 might be applied.

4.7 Inappropriate conduct towards venue staff/representatives or members of the public at an RCN event will not be tolerated. Participants should also respect other venues' own policies in respect of safety and conduct.

4.8 Behaviour by participants during travel to and from a venue and at site visits is subject to this policy.

5. Consequences of unacceptable behaviour

5.1 The following is a list of actions which might be taken because of breaches of the above Code of Conduct for RCN Events

- immediate verbal and/or written warning (templates for written warnings are available in the RCN's *Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Guidelines*)
- removal of some or all event privileges (e.g., attendance at social events)
- banning from any sessions for the remainder of the event at which the alleged offender and the person reporting would both be present
- immediate expulsion from the event with (where applicable) no refund
- immediate cessation of an event session if the incident is associated with it (e.g., if inappropriate/offensive material is presented as part of the session or disruption takes place during a session)
- referral to mediation or other processes to achieve a joint outcome
- escalation of the matter for consideration to the RCN's complaints process for further investigation or straight to internal disciplinary measures or member resolution processes if the offender is an RCN employee or member (noting that further sanctions such as barring from all future RCN events or removal from membership might be applied)
- escalation of the matter to another authority, e.g regulator or the police.

6 Managing incidents, complaints, and incident reporting at RCN events

6.1 RCN staff at events must ensure they are familiar with the *RCN Guidelines on managing unacceptable behaviour* plus any advice or guidance which relates specifically to the event.

- 6.2 All complaints/incidents at an event (including events such as branch meetings where a member of staff is not present at the time) should be reported to a member of RCN staff and investigated as soon as possible.
- 6.3 It is important that when incidents or complaints occur between two or more parties all those involved are listened to as part of the initial assessment of the situation and that everyone's perspective is acknowledged and recorded.
- 6.4 For larger events a staff member should be specifically designated to be responsible for handling complaints/incidents - those individuals should be properly supported and trained as appropriate. Their role will be to ensure that complaints/incidents are recorded, to undertake initial investigation, and to escalate the management of them appropriately if it is necessary.
- 6.5 The escalation process itself will vary from event to event depending on the scale of the event. The important thing is to ensure that there is one and that it is properly followed.
- 6.6 Incidents should be reported either via the Accident and Incident reporting form (on the RCN intranet and in the *RCN's Managing unacceptable behaviour guidelines*) or on a form designed specifically for that event.
- 6.7 Complaints should be reported to the RCN's Customer Relations Manager who will record the complaint and the actions taken.
- 6.8 A draft template for a complaints/incident form is included in Appendix A of this document.
- 6.9 Participants at the event, other than staff, can also use the RCN's complaints and feedback process on the RCN website.
- 6.10 The person making the complaint/reporting the incident should be advised to keep the information confidential until RCN staff have had sufficient time to investigate and address the situation. This is as much for their safety and protection as it is for other participants.
- 6.11 The person making the complaint/reporting the incident should be encouraged to report it regardless of whether the alleged offender is a participant at the event or external such as a venue representative. The individual might be subject to the conduct policies of other organisations, but the RCN would want to work with all bodies associated with the event to address issues of conduct.

- 6.12 If required staff should assist in completing the form and collecting information and provide a quiet place to do so.
- 6.13 Depending on the immediate circumstances and following initial investigation, the staff member/s dealing with complaints/incidents onsite should decide whether other parties, e.g., security staff or the police, should also be notified. Where appropriate such referrals will be made in discussion with the person making the complaint/reporting the incident. However, depending on circumstances the staff member might need to make the referral themselves.
- 6.14 Staff should also compile their own report on actions taken. Where possible the alleged offender should be contacted, and their response noted in the report. That person may also wish to make a separate report or complete an incident form with their version of events and should be offered the opportunity to do so.
- 6.15 If staff need to take any actions as listed in 5.1 above, the report should note the alleged offender's response, including any refuting of the allegation or appeal against the decision made. Note that, depending on the circumstances and details of the incident and in the interests of fairness and transparency, it may not be possible to withhold names.
- 6.16 If the incident relates to a young person or vulnerable adult, staff should refer to the *RCN's Safeguarding guidance*.
- 6.17 Complaints/Incidents reports will be stored as confidential documents by the RCN's Customer Relations Manager/Health & Safety Manager in line with normal document retention policies.
- 6.18 All complaints, incidents and resulting action taken must also be reported to the Executive Team member responsible for the event as soon as possible.

7 Communications and public relations

- 7.1 All parties aware of the incident should be informed that it has been reported and action taken, while respecting the privacy of individuals concerned and keeping revealing details to a minimum.
- 7.2 Depending on the nature of the incident and its aftermath, a senior officer of the event may wish to make an announcement – for example as part of a closing plenary. While (as advised above) details and identities are to be kept confidential, rumours and hearsay can spread quickly so it may be prudent to make a discretionary announcement that an incident occurred, and appropriate action taken. Such an announcement should only be

made by a suitably senior figure such as a conference chair or equivalent, or someone with delegated authority.

Appendix A – Complaints and Incident reporting form template for use at RCN events

Name of complainant or person affected by the incident:	
Contact details:	
Date:	
Descriptions of complaint/incident:	
Witness/es [include name and contact details]	
Description of what they witnessed:	
Name and role of person dealing with complaint/incident:	
Contact details:	
Action taken:	
Has the complaint/incident been logged? Y/N [explain where it has been logged]	
Was the complaint/incident	

<p>reported to someone else? If so, please describe who and how it was reported:</p>	