

## Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – March 2023

1. This report reflects work done by the Professional Nursing Committee since the last report to Council and an update from our most recent meeting on 14 March 2023.
2. On 15 March we met jointly with the Trade Union Committee to discuss the RCN's new 5-year strategy in greater detail, to ensure alignment of our respective work programmes. We also spent some time together discussing the development of the Institute of Nursing Excellence and carrying out a values clarification exercise. We discussed the purpose of the Institute, how we can achieve this, what we believe will help implementation, and any potential challenges we may experience along the way.
3. We also held a PNC workshop on the afternoon of 15 March to follow up on the morning discussion on the Institute and to spend some time considering our work programme for 2023 and agreeing our ways of working for the remainder of the year.
4. As reported previously, our monthly 'deep dive' sessions continue having met on 16 February to discuss PNC members experience of industrial action and role in regional strike oversight committees and on 4 April to discuss nursing substitution (linked to the professional framework project).
5. Our monthly podcast '[Nursing Matters](#)' remains temporarily halted while an evaluation of its reach and engagement is carried out by the Communications Team. We plan to resume recording in the Spring and are considering future content ideas.
6. The report of our meeting in March follows.

### Chair's Update

7. I updated the Committee on arrangements for Congress 2023. Following the PNC resolution on the strength of the RCN as both a professional body and trade union being accepted onto the Congress agenda, I confirmed that Denise Kelly will second the resolution on behalf of the Trade Union Committee. I also confirmed that the Committee will be running an event on the Learning and Wellbeing Programme with Denise Chaffer, former RCN President, on the importance of a just and learning culture.

8. Additionally, PNC members will be taking part in the event to launch the Workforce Standards Champions initiative as part of the Staffing for Safe and Effective Care campaign and PNC member for London, Paul Trevatt, will be representing the Committee at the event to update on the 'protect the title nurse' campaign.

#### Director's Update

9. Nicola Ranger, Director of Nursing, updated us on the work of the Nursing Department and on the key issues currently facing members across the four countries. Top of the agenda was an update on pay negotiations and industrial action across the UK.
10. The outcome of the pay negotiations became known later that week. Following the recommendation of the offer to members, PNC were extremely concerned by the challenges we saw directed at Pat Cullen, other members of her Executive Team, and Council. We wrote to them, alongside our colleagues on the Trade Union Committee to thank them for their leadership and to condemn the unacceptable personal abuse they have experienced.
11. We discussed concerns that mental health nurses are being substituted across the UK with other registered nurses or, in some cases, members of the unregistered workforce. Under the terms of the Mental Health Act 1983, there must be a mental health nurse in certain settings. The RCN has written to the four Chief Nursing Officers to highlight this.
12. We also discussed our concern that there is no bespoke plan for nursing in the Health Education England 15-year workforce plan; a concern that Nicola is taking forward as HEE merges with NHS England and NHS Improvement. The absence of a Chief Nurse in government means the RCN needs to work harder to advocate for nursing and ensure the voice of nursing is heard in Westminster.
13. Following an initial discussion in January we discussed our concerns regarding the decline in applications to study nursing, and the high attrition rates currently being reported. Nicola confirmed that urgent work will be undertaken to understand the true picture across the UK.
14. We recognise that the cost and provision of childcare is a significant factor in people not being able to complete their training courses, but also that it is a significant issue for registered nurses on low wages, particularly when they are working unsocial hours.

## Introduction to the RCN's Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive

15. We were delighted to welcome Davinder Viridi to our meeting to discuss his new role as Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive and look forward to working with him in the coming months. We recognised some of the challenges he may face in this role and offered our support where needed.
16. We also discussed with Davinder progress on implementation of the recommendations arising from the Carr and KPMG reviews and were pleased to hear that the RCN's internal auditors have been engaged to look at this as part of their 2023 audit plan to ensure the relevant assurances can be provided to RCN Council and others.

## Committee Work Programme 2023

17. We considered progress against our key workstreams carried over from 2022 and discussed the proposed approach to our 2023 work programme. We agreed that once the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence has been launched, we will review and align our work programme KPIs to the academies and strategic goals and objectives.
18. We recognised that it is currently challenging to agree milestones and when items will be presented to the Committee for approval as this will be determined by the academies envisioned within the current proposals for the Institute as they establish their workplans.
19. We are now looking at how we communicate our programme of work to the wider membership to articulate what the PNC does and its key areas of focus for the year ahead.
20. A key part of our role is to monitor and interrogate the Committee's risk register. As at all of our meetings, we spent time looking at this in detail and continue to refine this approach to ensure that we can be assured of the mitigating actions in place for our key risks.

## Update on the Professional Framework Project

21. Following discussion at our September and December meetings and our deep dive session on 25 October where this project was our focus, we received a further update on the professional practice workstream of the professional framework project, specifically looking at the definition of nursing.
22. We spent some time reviewing again the short and long definitions of nursing which had been further refined following a recent meeting of the Executive Team. We agreed both definitions subject to some final minor amendments.

23. We also discussed progress against the levels of practice workstream and noted that work on the career framework workstream was due to commence on 21 March.
24. Our 'deep dive' session on 4 April was used to discuss the work on nursing substitution, and we are working to strengthen an existing [RCN position statement](#) on this important issue.

#### Nursing Associates Extended Scope of Practice – RCN Position Statement

25. Following concerns we raised previously that we are increasingly seeing Nursing Associates (NAs) being used to substitute RNs in the workforce, we received a first draft of the RCN position statement on NAs scope of practice.
26. We recognised that while the NA role currently only exists in England, the other three UK countries are considering whether to introduce or revise similar roles at Band 4 and so this is a critical time for this issue.
27. We are clear as a Committee that the NA role should not be rolled out in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland until a formal evaluation of the role in England has been carried out. We agreed previously that the position statement should include a demand for Health Education England to commission this evaluation as a matter of urgency to include the role definition, scope of practice, career progression and skill mix – something HEE has always promised to do but has so far not delivered. This is now further challenged by the merge of HEE into NHSE/I.
28. Following our discussion, we look forward to receiving a second draft of the position statement shortly.

#### Evaluation of the Sheffield Research Alliance

29. We discussed the findings of three separate evaluation reports of the RCN's research alliance with the University of Sheffield. The findings of all three reports informed an 'RCN Strategic Vision Event' in January 2023 and were explored further with two membership webinars in January/ February 2023. The findings will inform development of the Institute of Nursing Excellence and the RCN's Research Strategy.

#### Forums and Networks Review

30. Having received reassurance in January that implementation of the recommendations arising from the Forums and Networks Review is a key priority for the new Director of Nursing, Nicola Ranger updated us on progress.

31. We were pleased to hear that Nicola is working with the Chair of the Forum Chairs Committee and the Chair of the Forums Governance Group to understand the challenges faced by the professional forums. This will inform plans to move forward with implementation of the recommendations and improving the support currently provided to our Forum Chairs.
32. We heard about the work already commenced and the work that was being scoped to begin shortly. We recognise the frustrations of the forum steering committees with regards to delayed implementation of the recommendations of the review and will bring more detail on progress in our next report.

#### UK Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)

33. At every meeting, we receive an update from the Chair of the UK Programme Board for Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) on activity across the four countries.
34. Following the recent period of industrial action and the critical need for safe staffing to be central to communications across this campaign, we agreed that discussion is now needed to refine the RCN's ambitions around staffing over the next five years and firm up next steps.
35. We noted that there was a wealth of data gathered from members during the industrial action on day-to-day establishments and staffing rotas which will be analysed to feed into that discussion.
36. It is also important to continue the work to embed our Nursing Workforce Standards in the SSEC programme, and to mark the forthcoming anniversary of their publication.

#### Congress 2022 and 2023

37. We noted an update on work arising from Congress 2022 and received a detailed report on the campaign to protect the title nurse from Paul Trevatt who is our PNC lead for this workstream. As mentioned above, we will be updating members on progress of this resolution via an event on the Learning and Wellbeing Programme at Congress 2023.
38. We also discussed PNC arrangements for Congress 2023.

#### Next Meetings

39. The next formal PNC meeting takes place after Congress at RCN HQ and via Microsoft Teams on 27 June 2023.

## Committee Membership

Rachel Hollis (Yorkshire and the Humber – CHAIR)

Siobhan Donald (Northern Ireland – VICE CHAIR)

Mary Codling (South East)

Martha Gill (Scotland)

Tracie Culpitt (Nursing Support Worker)

Tim Grace (Northern)

Ray McMorrow (West Midlands)

Sue Haines (East Midlands)

Paul Trevatt (London)

Carolyn Middleton (Wales)

Suzanne Davies (Student)

Alison Paterson (Eastern)

Sally Young (North West)

Colin Baker (South West)

There were no apologies received for the March meeting.

Rachel Hollis

Chair, Professional Nursing Committee

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