

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

12 September 2022

- 1 The Board Chair opened the meeting by asking Board members to observe a one minute silence as a mark of respect to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A message of condolence on behalf of the Board has been recorded, alongside further messages from individual Board members, in the RCN book of condolence that resides in the reception area at 17 Windsor Avenue and is now open to all RCN members and staff.
- 2 The Board received a presentation on the current development of the RCN's next five year strategy. Comments from Board members have previously been submitted to help inform the draft strategy.
- 3 The Board received and discussed an update on the RCN pay campaign in Northern Ireland. This focused on the decision in August to conduct a ballot of RCN members employed by the HSC on Agenda for Change terms and conditions, the formal notification of the ballot to HSC employers and the Department of Health, and the recent decision to pause the ballot process and associated campaigning during the period of official mourning following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
- 4 The Board received and discussed an updated and reviewed RCN Northern Ireland risk register, a quarterly financial report, a performance management and performance management highlights report for the second quarter of 2022, an associated assurance framework, and an operational plan for the second quarter of 2022. A number of matters for clarification were raised by Board members.
- 5 The Board received, noted and discussed an update on the various public inquiries currently taking place in relation to health issues in Northern Ireland. These involve allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, urology services in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, neurology services in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and the early stages of the UK Covid-19 public inquiry. Issues related to the now concluded hyponatraemia public inquiry were also raised.
- 6 The Board Chair provided brief verbal updates to Board members on the [Carr Review of the culture of the RCN](#) and the KPMG review of RCN governance structures, both of which are due to be published shortly.
- 7 The Board received and extensively discussed issues arising from an update on the NHS job evaluation scheme, which is used to determine the pay bands for all posts within Agenda for Change terms and conditions of service. The paper highlighted the role of the RCN Northern Ireland job evaluation project lead in providing training for staff, members and accredited representatives in order to raise awareness and

understanding of the necessary steps and level of information to be provided when requesting a job evaluation.

- 8 The Board received and discussed reports from the six RCN branches in Northern Ireland covering the second quarter of 2022. The Board noted the various significant concerns raised by the branches in relation to patient safety and the Board is now urgently considering options for further escalating and addressing these issues.
- 9 The Board discussed and agreed the need to provide enhanced support and guidance to internationally-recruited nurses working in Northern Ireland.
- 10 The Board noted that 17 Windsor Avenue is now open to members and staff five days each week from 9am to 5pm. It was also noted that RCN staff are now working within a hybrid model in line with colleagues across the UK.
- 11 The Board Chair provided an update on the RCN Board election process. It was noted that the nomination period has now concluded.
- 12 The Board was informed that RCN responses have now been submitted to two major Department of Health consultations, on proposals related to [1] raising a concern in the public interest (or whistleblowing) and [2] violence and aggression in the workplace. It was also reported that the RCN has submitted written evidence to a review of hospital waiting times in Northern Ireland being conducted by the Northern Ireland Audit Office [NIAO]. This submission focuses primarily on the significant nursing workforce challenges underpinning the escalation in waiting times over recent years and particularly as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 13 The Board received and noted a verbal update on issues relating to nursing in the independent sector and within GP practices. Board members also received and noted written updates on the work of the RCN Trade Union Committee, Professional Nursing Committee, Reps Committee, Students Committee and the Nursing Support Workers Committee.
- 14 The next quarterly RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting takes place on Monday 5 December 2022. The Board also noted and agreed meeting dates for 2023.