



Portsmouth Branch meeting – Via Teams

27/08/2020 @ 1700-1830

Attendees:

Liz Jeremiah (Chair), Sue Jones (Vice Chair), Shelley Pearce (Secretary) & Dana Brown (Treasurer) Jeremy Benton (South East Council Member) Patricia Marquis (Regional Director) David Cozens (Regional Officer) Jonathan Hambry (Student Nurse ambassador)

Consent gained from all present for the session to be recorded

Apologies:

Bernadette Medcalf

Pay:

Jeremy Benton (South East Council Member)

- The pay campaign will launch Friday 28th August 2020
- Members will all be contacted via the e-mail regarding the campaign

Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair, Trade union Committee)

- The campaign is asking for a substantial & meaningful pay rise for all members; support workers, nurse associates, nurses & nurse practitioners. All bands on Agenda for change.
- It is a member led campaign with evidence from a member survey & then sense checked with all elected members within the college.
- The survey received the highest turnout in RCN history with 43,000 respondents (approx 9% of members).
- Sent to NHS staff as it is the NHS Pay review body, its not about excluding the independent or private sector as often those areas take their lead from public sector pay as it has a knock on effect. So the reason I'm referring to the NHS is because this is the pay lift we are referring to, those on Agenda for Change.
- Various leaks on social media regarding other unions asks, Unison 6% or £2000 whichever is higher. GMB 15% mirroring the Public Sector Says No! campaign.
- This campaign can be supported by members but it is important to understand that the ask the RCN has arrived at is based upon the responses to the survey and has been 'sense checked' with elected representatives, forums, Trade Union Committee, Professional Nursing Committee and branches.
- Two priorities were identified; Staffing for Safe & effective Care & Pay. Both Campaigns are interlinked & both are member led.
- We cannot provide Safe & Effective Care without enough nurses. Without a substantial pay rise we will continue to haemorrhage nursing staff & fail to attract them to the profession.
- Nursing is a graduate profession it must reflect that with a competitive salary

David Cozens (Regional Officer)

- You keep referring to nurses and people who wish to train as a nurse. We must not forget our Nursing Support workers.

Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair, Trade union Committee)

- An excellent point, when I say nurse I am referring to all within the nursing family; Nursing Support Workers, Nursing Associates, Associate Practitioners, and Student nurses. We are all vital cogs in the wheel that is the NHS.

Shelley Pearce (Branch Secretary)

- Much of nursing care is delivered by non registered staff, who have families to support, bills to pay & give many unsocial hours despite poor pay for the essential work they do.

Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair, Trade union Committee)

- A few people have expressed that we should not be seeking a rise given the economic position of the country due to the pandemic. To them I say if not now, then when?
- We do not want a bonus for our commitment during the pandemic.
- Understandably Nurses are feeling deflated, I want to reignite their passion and encourage them to participate. Get involved. Become a e-campaigner and get involved at Branch.
- We appreciate time is at a premium, we do not want a commitment of a specific number of hours, but anything & everything that we can all do to keep pay on the agenda while maintaining public support.

Jeremy Benton (South East Council Member)

- There has been a lot of reorganisation in the College. Council is now half the size and includes the President, Vice President & some non-voting members.
- Council delegates responsibility for decision making to the Professional Nursing Committee and to the Trade Union Committee for Professional matters and Trade Union matters respectively.
- Councils role is to ratify the decisions made, to ensure due process and governance.
- It is those committees that debate often at length and make decisions based upon those discussions.
- The Pay campaign is member led. Which started by finding out what members wanted & expected to see.
- 42,000 members (9%) expected 0% to low single figures but wanted north of 10%
- Presentations have been given to elected members generated feedback & we are confident we are asking for what the members want.
- Extensive research has been commissioned to understand the economic impact on all staff on all bands.
- Unlike the previous deal which was complicated & involved changes to Agenda for Change this deal is by contrast a straightforward ask for all staff on all bands mandated by the membership.
- We are prepared to go alone on this issue, but will still collectively bargain on other issues with the other unions.
- It is members who have made this possible along with the the commitment of staff such as Patricia Marquis who have been key in ensuring a member led approach to this campaign.
- Everyone in the College is promoting the need for control to be with members, something I am personally very passionate about.

Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair, Trade union Committee)

- I have consistently said we should show our teeth on this. Our members are not being paid what they deserve. We have endured years of pay restraint & austerity measures.
- Yes people clapped & had rainbows displayed in their windows but this does not convert into money in the bank

Dana Brown (Branch Treasurer)

- Demonstrated her "I nursed in the 2020 Pandemic" rainbow tee-shirt.

Shelley Pearce (Branch Secretary)

- Managing & treating infectious disease is a key aspect of our role. We would have always been at the heart of the response. We just want to be paid properly.

Sue Jones (Vice Branch Chair)

- Good to hear the pay campaign is getting underway at a time when we have a groundswell of public support and the initial wave of Covid-19 behind us.
- I think it is important to change the perception of Nursing being a vocation.
- We do do it because we love it but on the other hand there is no other way to survive in this world if you don't make money. Therefore it cannot be purely a vocation, if it does not feed our families, we are working class people. If we are not working we are not eating. So there needs to be that understanding that we need to be earning enough to keep us here or we will take our skills and expertise elsewhere.

Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair, Trade union Committee)

- As a TU committee we have discussed the language used at length. While it is the public's prerogative to refer to us as heroes at the risk of sounding ungrateful we are not heroes; this is what we do day in day out we are not suddenly heroes. We are and always have been professionals trained to perform the roles we do.

Patricia Marquis (Regional Director)

- The hard work starts now. The groundwork is done. We have consulted. Now we need to be realistic about the need to mobilise the membership & get active to put the necessary pressure on government to achieve our ask.
- We have tried to secure a joint union position but this remains unlikely.
- It is not all about the negotiators in the room, it is about making noise and contacting your MP.
- Other unions may have different asks, but we are all asking for nursing staff to be paid properly.
- Many may wish to strike but there is work to be done before that can happen.

Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair, Trade union Committee)

- Trade union legislation regarding industrial action - first we need to be in dispute. Secondly their needs to be a mandate. If members are balloted then at least 50% must return their ballot unspoiled and of that return 50% must be in favour for any industrial action for it to be lawful.
- There is currently no mandate. Nothing has been presented to be in dispute with.
- So for all of those members who say "I don't want to fly a flag, sign a postcard or sign up to be an e-campaigner I want to go on strike" It is really important we explain what the law surrounding Industrial Action actually means.
- This legislation does not apply in Northern Ireland if it did, they would not have been able to take the action they have.
- It is also important to note that Industrial Action is anything leading up to and including full strike, such as work to rule.

- It is important that everyone understands we cannot simply decide to call a strike. It would be seen as unlawful and you would be referred to the NMC.
- It is not that as a College we do not want nor would consider strike should it come to that but there are strict conditions which need to be met by law first.

AOB:

- **Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair)** to find out if any members had difficulty accessing the meeting as attendance was not in line with the number expected.
- Discussion about visibility in the workplace and how Covid-19 has impacted on this. **David Cozens (Regional Officer)** explained how the trust has expressed that all unions are to be promoted equally and due to this reason a session delivered by Learning Representative Kim Bygrave was removed from the preceptorship programme. **Sue Jones (Vice Chair)** described how at corporate induction she along with the other unions have a presence at break times and can approach people during that time but do not have an allotted time to promote the union to delegates. Discussion around the trust position on not allowing one union to have more influence and how to recruit & retain members.
- **John Hambry (Student Ambassador)** shared that there was some annoyance and frustration with the lack of communication from Public Health England.
- **Dana Brown (Branch Treasurer)** shared concerns regarding student nurses while 'opting in' to paid placement and the level of supervision and stepping up into the numbers and confusion around what they were able to do while on placement as the lines blurred between other band four roles. Resulting in concern they were 'acting up' to fill staffing gaps. **Jeremy Benton (South East Council Member)** Asked if as students they felt supported by the College. The very last thing any of us expected was that the government was going to 'call up' student nurses. There was no plan for it so as a College we were on the back foot. Is there anything that could have been done better?
- **Dana Brown (Branch Treasurer) & Shelley Pearce (Branch Secretary)** shared their experiences of contacting RCND and not having any follow up. **David Cozens (Regional Officer)** asked both to provide some further information to find out why the concerns raised were not followed up. **Jeremy Benton (South East Council Member)** also voiced his interest and would like to help understand what went wrong as also has a role on the Audit Committee and is keen to ensure that the provision of service to members is to the standard expected.
- **Dana Brown (Branch Treasurer)** Highlighted that some students are concerned that there placements are not being extended further. **Patricia Marquis (Regional Director)** indicated that placements have already been extended and is not going to happen again with a sense of returning to normality required. She stated there was a Student ambassador meeting later where this issue could be explored further. **Liz Jeremiah (Branch Chair & Trade Union Committee member)** Also stated her availability to attend.