

# Activate

January 2016

News, views and support for RCN activists



## A century of campaigning

2016 marks 100 years since the formation of the Royal College of Nursing and it's a time to recognise the role every activist has played in helping the College grow and remain strong

A host of events is planned throughout the year to mark the occasion and show appreciation for the hard work of members and activists past and present who have established the College as the voice of nursing.

RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies said: "This is a historic year for the RCN and everybody involved in the College. Even though we didn't officially become a trade union until 1916, campaigning has always been at the heart of our most successful work; representing members and helping to improve workplace conditions and nursing practice in general.

"With a record number of members and a growing influence at a time of upheaval in the NHS and the independent sector, it is important the hard work continues to ensure the next generation of activists can take up the mantle and the College is in an even stronger position when it celebrates its 100th anniversary."

For more information on upcoming events and how you can get involved go to [www.rcn.org.uk/RCN](http://www.rcn.org.uk/RCN) and look out for more details in future issues of Activate

Turn to page 10 to find out more about the centenary launch event and how you can apply for an invitation to one of four Royal Garden Parties hosted by the RCN's patron, Her Majesty the Queen. Turn to page 12 for a feature on the history of RCN campaigning and some of the organisation's most important milestones.

## RCN advice during strikes

Activists are urged to familiarise themselves with RCN guidance on what to do when colleagues are involved in industrial action.

Following the walkout of junior doctors' last week, a further three days of strike action were planned as Activatent to press. Unless progress is made talks between the Government and British Medical Association, whom the RCN has campaigned alongside in the past, junior doctors are due to provide emergency care only between am on Tuesday January and am on Thursday January and to fully withdraw labour between am and pm on Wednesday February.

The RCN guidance, which reps are encouraged to share with members, outlines what rights nursing staff have in terms of taking on increased workloads while avoiding undermining lawful industrial action.

Download Industrial Action by Other Unions from [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

## Centenary celebrations

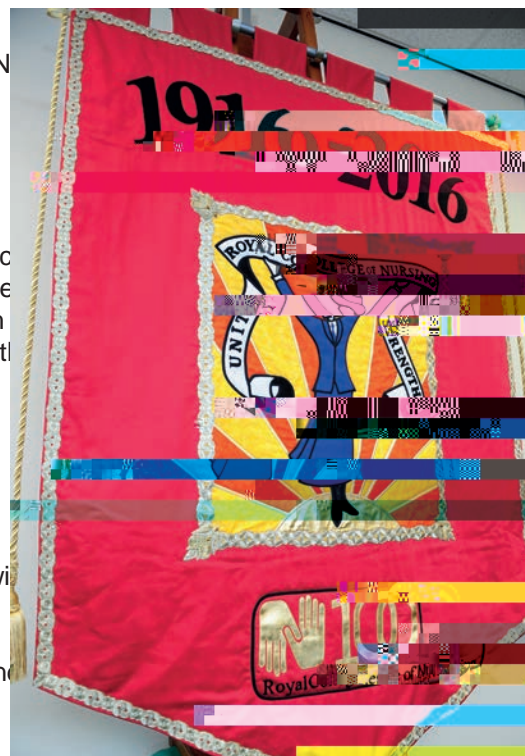
The RCN's centenary celebrations began on January with a fantastic launch event at RCN headquarters in London.

RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies and RCN President Cecilia Anim spoke about how much they were looking forward to the year of events ahead recognising the College's historic anniversary. They received a handmade banner (pictured) from the Townswomen's Guilds, with whom the RCN has campaigned alongside in the past, to mark the centenary.

This was the first of events taking place throughout including four Royal Garden Parties, hosted by RCN Patron, Her Majesty the Queen. In recognition of the significance of this historic milestone a small number of members will be given the chance to attend.

Members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland can apply to attend Buckingham Palace on , and May. Members in Scotland can apply to attend at Holyrood House in Edinburgh on July.

Members available on the dates above are asked to complete an application form, including words explaining why they deserve to be given a place at [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/royalgardenparty](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/royalgardenparty) /



Successful applications will be chosen by Cecilia Anim and RCN Chair of Council Michael Brown.

The deadline to complete applications is midday on Friday January. Successful applicants will be notified by Friday February.

## 10,000 nurse vacancies in capital, reports RCN

New RCN research has exposed a critical shortage of registered nursing staff in London with more than , vacant posts in the capital's NHS trusts last year.

The figure, gathered through Freedom of Information requests, is equivalent to per cent of the total registered nursing workforce in the NHS in London in .

The RCN believes historic cuts to training places in conjunction with the ongoing NHS pay freeze means many London trusts are unable to find the permanent staff they need. The shortage is resulting in employers having to choose between putting patients at risk by running wards short of staff, or turning to expensive solutions like temporary agency workers.

RCN London Regional Director Bernell Bussue said: "The Government urgently needs to give nursing staff a pay rise at a level which helps them settle in the capital for the long term, before staffing shortages start to damage the quality of care."

## Figures reveal thousands of overseas nurses denied work

More than , nurses were denied permission to work in the UK last year, despite chronic staff shortages.

A Freedom of Information request by the RCN to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) shows that , applications by trusts for Certificates of Sponsorship were refused between April and November .

When an organisation recruits a nurse from outside the European Economic Area they must apply for a Certificate of Sponsorship. Until November last year, nurses were not on the shortage occupation list (SOL) and as a result, the number of certificates was limited.

After RCN campaigning, nursing has since been placed on the SOL but this was a temporary measure while the MAC assessed whether the profession warranted a permanent place on the list. Activatent will include the committee's final recommendation when it is made public in February.

## Thousands protest for bursary rethink

The controversial Trade Union Bill has had its second reading in the House of Lords as it continues its journey through the law-making process.

# VIEWS

2016 is a special year

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## Scrutinising Agenda for Change

Twelve years ago I became a representative in the wake of Agenda for Change, so it seems fitting that this year I'm now involved in reviewing its terms and conditions to secure a better deal for all NHS nursing staff.

Like many of you, when I first qualified as a nurse I never envisaged that I'd be involved with the RCN as an activist. But following an appeal for representatives when Agenda for Change came into practice in 2004 I responded to the College's call and I've never looked back.

For the past year I've been Chair of the UK Safety Representatives' Committee and that has been an eye-opening experience. I've been involved in a host of meetings and developments, but what stands out is the commitment of all representatives and stewards to help members get a fair deal in the workplace.

Which brings me back to my involvement in Agenda for Change. It was clearly a huge development for health care but in the time since its launch, pay bands have moved on and overlapped to the point where some nurses are now getting a promotion but seeing no improvement in salary. Clearly this is something that can't continue, which is why we have agreed to undertake a review. It will be a long process but we hope at the end of it, we'll see an improvement in the deal for all NHS nurses and HCAs.

Denise McLaughlin, Chair of the RCN UK Safety Representatives' Committee

References are tricky things, as the recent case of Pnaiser v NHS England and Coventry City Council shows. During her employment with the council, Ms Pnaiser had taken a lot of time off work because of a medical condition ffo-8(wa10( ).9()CID 40

## 100 years of championing nursing

As the RCN enters its centenary year David Ford takes a look at the history of the organisation from its formation in 1916 to its transition to a trade union in 1976 and beyond

One hundred years ago Dame Sarah Swift, Matron-in-Chief of the British Red Cross, began setting up the College of Nursing Ltd. Supported by Sir Arthur Stanley MP and matrons of several leading hospitals, this was the birth of the RCN as we know it today with its mission of championing nursing and improving the education of nurses.

The College was formed on March 1916 with just 100 members. In September 1916, the Scotland board was set up in Edinburgh which members felt was needed to better deal with local issues. Ireland soon followed suit when, in February 1917, the Ireland board of the College of Nursing Ltd was established. By the end of 1917 local centres were set up in Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, Liverpool and London.

By 1920, membership had grown to more than 1,000 and the College of Nursing Ltd moved to its current headquarters at Cavendish Square in London. That year was significant as the College began to make its first strides into influencing health care policy with its report on salaries and employment conditions. The report recommended a maximum 40-hour working week for nurses, though members' objections meant that this was raised to 48 hours.

### Moving forward

The 1920s was a decade of great advancement with the establishment of the College of Nursing Ltd Library, free to all nursing students; opened with 100 books and 100 readers, in 1921. The first specialist section (for sister tutors) was created the following year.

Queen Mary became the official patron of the College and regularly visited Cavendish Square until her death in 1926. This paved the way for the Royal Charter the College received in 1928. The College wasn't allowed to formally use Royal in its title until 1952, as the application was opposed by other nursing organisations.

The 1930s saw the appointment of Frances Goodall as General Secretary. She would be influential in setting a precedent for the

RCN negotiating with the Government and having a say in health care policy. The work of nurses during the Second World War led to the creation of the RCN's coat of arms bearing the motto "tradimus lampada" meaning "we carry the torch".

The College's education department was established in 1920 and nurses attended courses and lectures arranged by the College.

Catherine Hall was appointed General Secretary in 1920 and would become the College's longest-serving General Secretary, holding the position until 1952. She was known for her phenomenal hard work and diligence. Her tenure was a period of substantial change for the RCN and created the College we know today.

### Decade of change

Despite the RCN not becoming a trade union until 1976, it was the 1920s which laid the platform for this movement as growing discontent among nurses in the health service saw the College standing up on pay, terms and conditions.

In 1920, RCN membership was opened up to men and Albery Verdun Whittamore became the first male nurse to be voted onto the RCN Council.

Between 1920 and 1925 nurses' wages fell to 75 per cent of the average national salary. The first public pay campaign was launched in 1925. The Royal College of Nursing began its own campaign in support of higher pay when public sector salaries were frozen because of an economic crisis in 1925. The campaign, much like the recent Safe Staffing Levels Bill in Wales, mainly involved writing letters to MPs.

This was followed in 1926 by the RCN's Raise the Rate campaign which aimed to gain an average pay rise for nurses of 10 per cent. The campaign was widely supported and largely considered a success as it achieved the largest single increase in salary in the history of nursing - a rise of 10 per cent in a year.

That same year, Harrogate hosted the first

Look out for more special centenary stories to come through  
in *Activate* and *RCN Bulletin* including a history of the  
RCN Presidents and more on how you can get involved.

This month's Tools of the Trade includes a guide on surveillance in the workplace. *Monitoring and Surveillance at Work - A Practical Guide for Trade Union Reps* summarises the key legislation and case law covering privacy at work and brings reps up to date with union activity to combat invasion of privacy in the workplace. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/jkaebm>

The UK Government's pledge to invest extra funds into workplace health issues has been