

Anti-austerity



Taking to the streets

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rally on

Calling all retired members

The RCN will be holding a conference on 20 June to explore how it works with retired members and how to make best use of their skills and experience.

Members are involved in developing the programme for the event, which will be held at RCN HQ in London.

Anyone interested in attending should save the date or email wendy.irwin@rcn.org.uk for more information.

Facebook for HCAs

Learning agreement with Interserve Healthcare

The RCN is to sign a learning agreement with a leading homecare service provider to promote development opportunities for staff

The agreement with Interserve Healthcare will mean all its staff, including agency workers, will have access to RCN resources. Interserve will also formally recognise and support RCN learning reps, six of whom have already been recruited.

RCN Associate Director for Employment Relations Josie Irwin said: "The RCN is pleased to form a learning partnership with Interserve Healthcare. This agreement is timely, as the RCN has a strong commitment to our members in the agency nursing sector. We very much welcome the six newly recruited RCN learning reps who will play

a pivotal role in sharing and signposting our members and their health care colleagues to the wealth of RCN learning resources."

Andy Cook, Chief Nurse at Interserve Healthcare, added: "We are delighted to be working with the RCN and look forward to the benefits it will bring to us as a care provider, to our staff and, ultimately, the patients whose lives we support every day."

RCN member Arianne Shephard will be one of the new learning reps. "This is an exciting opportunity to embrace a role which will enable me to help others learn, grow and develop in person and as practitioners," she said.

The RCN has an online advice guide for agency workers. Access it at <http://tiny.cc/agency-guide>

Agenda set for Congress 2018

Are you an active

Action needed to encourage nursing applications

30 trainees against a Government ambition of 1,000 apprentices this year.

RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Janet Davies said: "Nursing is a wonderful career but the Government must do more to make it attractive to the tens (i) (6g) (Se) - 1(s) - 1 a 8 e t) - 1(e)n) - 6(s) (i) (6g) (Se) - (a) - 24(i) 3.7(o. 1(i) -

The number of students starting nursing degree courses is likely to fall again this year unless the Government takes urgent action, according to an RCN report

The report, *Left to Chance*, contains new figures which show the current number of applications for the next academic year has fallen by a third since the same point in 2016, and by 13% since last year.

This is despite Government attempts to boost the number of trainee nurses following the publication of the Francis report into care failings in Mid Staffordshire five years ago.

Last year, ministers repeatedly announced extra nurse training places but the RCN's analysis shows not enough students are applying to fill them.

In addition to the university student shortages, the new nursing apprenticeship attracted only

Election round-up



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You can also read articles from the RCN's main member magazine, *RCN Bulletin*, and there's tailored content for student and HCA members as well.

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VIEWS

Leading the way

ASK AN
ADVISER



Face-to-face contact

As Chair of the RCN East Kent branch I was delighted when two of our local MPs, Conservative Helen Whatley (Faversham and Mid Kent) and Labour's Rosie Duffield (Canterbury), accepted our invitation to attend a branch meeting.

My fellow branch officers and I worked hard to make sure we had a good turnout. An email went out to branch members and we put up posters, but there's no substitute for face-to-face contact. We talked to people we knew would have good ideas and asked them if they could come prepared to speak about issues they were passionate about.

Some of the many topics covered included making better use of experienced nurses' skills, staffing levels and the RCN's Close the Gap pay campaign. Members spoke frankly and at times bluntly about their experiences. Both Helen and

FEATURE

A new community of reps

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Let's be sociable

Facebook groups are a great way to connect with members and get them involved in your RCN work. But effective moderation is key to their continued success

The use of Facebook to connect and support members has exploded over the last 18 months. There are now almost 100 closed RCN Facebook groups, including one for nearly all the professional nursing forums, as well as those for branches, regional reps and students.

They can provide a great space to share news, seek advice, promote events and discuss nursing issues. But more than anything, they can help further your reach as an RCN activist, engaging members in ways not accessible before the advent of social media.

For Liz Jeremiah, Chair of the RCN Portsmouth branch, it's enabled better support for members with almost instant results.

"We've had members ask questions about, for example, revalidation," she says. "One asked how she could access online learning as she was part-time and wanted to study in a way that suited her home and family life. Within a couple of hours a number of other members, including learning reps, practice educators and others in similar positions, had responded with some really great advice."

Though a small patch, the Portsmouth branch Facebook group now has nearly 500 members. But while Liz is keen to encourage healthy debate, she has a no-nonsense attitude when it comes to moderation. "If a member has posted something with bad language I remind them that it will not be tolerated," she says. "Members are not to post anything which may be regarded as inflammatory or disrespectful and I will remove comments and posts, if required."

Simply be sensible

Liz is guided by the principles set out in the NMC's publication on using social media responsibly and is supported by RCN Regional Communications Manager Helen Wigginton.

"We do check that those requesting to join the group are members and ask questions to avoid accepting people who may wish to post about



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their own agenda or act in a way detrimental to others, the RCN or local employers," says Helen.

For the most part, however, discussions are positive. "We really haven't had to moderate very much," she assures. "The group is a safe and friendly place to talk about workplace issues and for members to seek support from each other.

"My advice is simply to be sensible. Though the groups are closed, anything posted on there can still be copied and shared. So long as members behave as they would do in a professional work

NHS Employers have produced *Language Competency: Good Practice Guidance for Employers* to assist with language competency assessment. Download a copy a