
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

FAIR PAY FOR NURSING

UPSKILLING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

YOUR TRADE UNION COMMITTEE

FOR RCN ACTIVE MEMBERS ACROSS THE UK

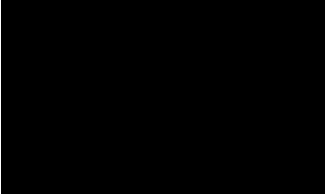
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Talking about pay with other members is the most important thing you can do to support our Fair Pay For Nursing campaign. We've developed materials including badges, window stickers and placards to help you spread the word, initiate conversations and build support. Order yours at tinyurl.com/fair-pay-materials

You can also download a



Meeting will be held at the end of November. The decision was agreed by Council members during a meeting on 1 October.

Council also gave approval to commission both an independent review of the presidential election process and market research to explore issues raised in the recent governance review. The decision was made not to recommence the RCN President elections until after the General Meeting.

In a recent email to members, newly-appointed Chair of RCN Council Dave Dawes (pictured) said: "I am determined as Chair to represent the full breadth of RCN members and the issues you care about most. I believe that not only do we need to become more member-led, but we need every single one of you to feel like we have become more member-led."

As Activate went to press, details for the Campaigning in the RCN Deputy President elections had also reopened.

For the latest information, visit rcn.org.uk/news-and-events. Don't forget to follow us on social media.

We're continuing to update our online advice guide with the latest information on issues relating to the pandemic and how it affects you or the members you support

Find answers to frequently asked questions on topics including: pay when self-isolating, pregnancy, testing, mental health and self-care, and annual leave.

We've also developed advice guides on PPE (rcn.org.uk/covid-19-ppe) and temporary redeployment (rcn.org.uk/redeployment). If you need support, call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100.

Visit rcn.org.uk/covid-19-advice

6 WORKPLACE SUPPORT

RCN steward Hilary Nelson is on a mission to make sure members who wear uniforms at work can get the adaptations they need

When a member contacted RCN steward Hilary Nelson asking for support to procure an adapted uniform, it dawned on Hilary that it wasn't something she'd thought about before.

Liz, the member, had recently had her lymph nodes removed due to breast cancer and as a result of this and other surgery, was unable to stretch her arms above her head to put on and take off the NHS Scotland tunic.

"Liz told me that for a while she'd had to come in to work early or stay late to get changed," says Hilary. "It wasn't an issue I'd come across previously, but I realised so many other members could be in a similar position."

Liz had spoken to her senior charge nurse who had taken on board her concerns but resolution, so she approached Hilary for support.

A long process

"In Scotland, we have a national uniform for NHS staff," says Hilary. "I spoke to the holder of the national uniform policy which says that uniforms with adaptations to meet religious or medical needs can be ordered."

"We had to go through occupational health and then put in a request with our procurement team. The tunics only cost £4.50, but the

Liz's view: 'It's given me back my self-esteem'

I felt very vulnerable having to ask for assistance to get undressed at work. I also felt awkward that I had to keep asking if there was any news on my adapted uniform.

When Hilary stepped in, she helped to explain the urgency. She made her presence and why she was supporting me known. I don't think I would have managed to get my uniform without her support. It's given me back my self-esteem and empowered me.

8 MENTAL HEALTH

It was inevitable that caring for patients in the high-stakes context of COVID-19 would take its toll on the mental health of nursing staff. But now, more than ever, the combination of exhaustion and trepidation about the scale of the second wave is having an impact on members' ability to cope.

Reps' work is being affected. Though many are managing fewer formal cases, such as disciplinaries and sickness absence, they're receiving more calls from members seeking support. In some instances, reps could be the only person members have felt able to speak to openly about their experiences at work during the pandemic.

Though it can be tempting to try to solve all members' problems, it's important for reps to signpost them to specialist psychological support. "We know how empathic our reps are," says Kim at Sunley. "They want to do all they can, but it's important that they protect their own mental health and don't

shoulder the emotional weight of what our members have been facing in these unprecedented times."

Signposting to support

Kim says: "The most helpful thing reps can do is to be knowledgeable about the local and national psychological support available and to signpost members to it. It's crucial to identify the need for mental health support early, have an honest and empathetic conversation about it, but then lead

members on to the specialist help they need."

That support has been increased considerably in light of the pandemic. NHS People has introduced a free helpline, operated by the Samaritans, which is free to access from 7am-11pm, seven days a week on **0800 069 6222**.

There is also a bereavement support line, operated by HospiceUK, which is also free to access from 8am-8pm, seven days a week on **0300 303 4434**.

10 SPEAKING UP



North Lincolnshire branch chair Mel Kerr's been busy spreading the word about our pay campaign. She explains what drives her and what tactics have proved effective

Why do you feel so passionate about fair pay for nursing?

Nursing has always been underpaid in my opinion, so when the government announced a pay rise for other public sector workers in July, it was breaking point for me.

I know we're not due our pay review until next year, but that's what this campaign is all about—demanding that talks are brought forward so we can receive a meaningful, early pay rise.

What have you been doing locally?

I share everything the RCN and its elected members put out on social media—videos, infographics, statistics—and have created my own videos too. I've also helped organise, and been a key speaker, at local pay protests.

How do you explain the campaign to the public?

I try to help them understand the facts. We've had a real terms pay cut over the past decade. There are more than 40,000 nursing vacancies in the NHS in England.

Students have to pay to do a nursing degree and qualify with crushing debt. And we're hemorrhaging staff because we can't make this a desirable job to stay in. A meaningful pay rise would help address all these issues.

How do you start a conversation with nursing staff about pay?

I always open with the leading question: do you feel you get fair and equal pay for the job you do? The majority of the time the answer is no, then I take it from there. I ask why they don't feel their pay is fair, what they want, and explain how they can be part of campaigning for change.

How do you think this campaign will be won?

It's about numbers. We must get more people involved. The public is on our side, so we need to support them to be active too. We need to be vocal, every one of us, and campaign for what we deserve.

It won't come easily, but we must force the government to listen because honestly, we're on our knees. We're crying out for a meaningful pay rise that recognises the true skill, responsibility and knowledge of nursing staff who hold up the NHS.

Find out more at rcn.org.uk/fairpayfornursing

FAIR PAY



Throughout the pandemic, the country has witnessed the most impressive demonstration of nursing, seeing it as a highly skilled profession deserving of fair pay. Nursing has been proven to be vital to public health.

But the Fair Pay For Nursing campaign is not about a response to COVID-19.

The Fair Pay For Nursing campaign is about recognising the complexity of the profession.

By committing to this pay rise in Westminster, funds can be released through devolved funding arrangements, allowing all parts of the UK to move forward on NHS pay.

The RCN expects fair pay for nursing staff regardless of employer, and continues to campaign for fair pay for members working across all independent health and social care sectors.

It is time to pay nursing staff fairly.

Members decided the level of the RCN ask. Our members responded to the Building a Better Future survey and the Trade Union Committee directly engaged with elected and appointed member representatives,

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION ABOUT PAY

Talking about pay is the single most important thing you can do. Every single member who is aware of and supports our campaign will make it more likely to succeed.

1. Do you think we are paid fairly?
2. What do you think about the RCN's Fair Pay For Nursing campaign?
3. Do you ever have to do extra shifts or bank work to supplement your salary?
4. Do you think pay is a barrier for people either joining or staying in our profession?
- 5.

With 2020 marking International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, members joined our #RCN2020 online debate to discuss the challenges and opportunities the future holds for the nursing profession

There are so many people showing an interest in nursing right now. It's our challenge and opportunity to pull these people in and make them thoroughly welcome.

Phil Noyes, RCN steward and Agenda Committee member

Nursing staff have a special link with patients, and we mustn't lose that and become something distant at the end of the screen.

Maggy Heaton, Chair of the RCN UK Stewards Committee and RCN Lancashire West Branch Chair

What makes nursing unique? We need to formulate a unique identity and a plan to show the public and politicians where nursing wants to be. It needs to be a positive message

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16 LEGAL UPDATE

Use the protected
characteristic
questionnaire

Under the Equality Act 2010,
it's unlawful to discriminate
against someone because of

during the case and the member journey. Case plan for every possible outcome including for

18 **FAIR TREATMENT**

Agency nurse Neomi Bennett BEM has launched a grassroots

with Zoom meetings held every Tuesday at 9pm and experts volunteering their time and advice.

The group now has more than 500 members with input from lawyers who specialise in human rights and race equality and culturally sensitive psychologists. It is run by Neomi Bennett and has received more than 100 calls from nurses seeking support because they feel they have been discriminated against at work.

“Often, it’s that they feel they’ve been targeted in some way, their treatment hasn’t been fair, or they’re being disciplined more harshly than other colleagues who aren’t black when dealing with issues of either the same or very similar circumstances,” explains Neomi.

Neomi Bennett is a Dragons’ Den entrepreneur and inventor of the Neo-slip stocking aid. She’s a Queen’s honours recipient for services to health care.

The statistics corroborate the anecdotes. The 2019-2020 inclusion data from the Nursing and Midwifery Council shows that black nurses made up 15.3% of the register, despite black nurses making up just 8.5% of the total register. Of those concerns raised, 62% of investigations against black nurses resulted in no case to answer.

“The focus of our work now is on supporting black nurses to lodge grievances with their employer,” says Neomi. “It’s about helping them to articulate what they’ve experienced and highlight systemic racism. We support nurses in a holistic way and consider how they perceive



I couldn't just sit back and do nothing

Neomi Bennett BEM is a Dragons’ Den entrepreneur and inventor of the Neo-slip stocking aid. She’s a Queen’s honours recipient for services to health care

Words by Kim Scott. Picture by Gareth Harmer

Related RCN resources

- Watch our webinar series about tackling race inequalities in nursing: rcn.org.uk/tacklingracism20
- Listen to our Nursing Whilst Black podcast series: tinyurl.com/nursing-whilest-black
- Find out about and get involved with our cultural ambassador programme: tinyurl.com/rcn-cultural-ambassador

If a member feels they’re being discriminated against at work, we would advise them to call RCN Direct for advice on 0345 772 6100.

Find out more about Equality 4 Black Nurses at equality4blacknurses.com s795225

20 NURSING IN A PANDEMIC

District nurse and RCN steward Jill Gale developed online training to ensure nursing staff had access to CPD during the pandemic and to improve patient care in the community

In April, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jill Gale, a specialist practitioner district nurse and RCN steward from North Yorkshire, was told to shield at home.

“Managers were looking at how they could utilise the skills of those shielding,” says Jill, who is also a member of the RCN Northern Board. “I’ve previously worked as a trust lead for end of life care and I have experience in developing palliative care policies.

“I was asked to look at wh

One nurse told
me she felt

Who sits on the committee?

The Trade Union Committee has 14 members: one member each from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and one from each of the nine English regions. The remaining two members are from the student and nursing support worker membership categories. Members are elected by the members they represent and sit on the committee for four years, with one half of the committee changing every two years.

The committee's

What's the committee's overall purpose?

Its purpose is to ensure the RCN develops as a modern, progressive trade union. The committee is accountable to RCN Council, making decisions on its behalf on all the RCN's trade union functions and activities.

How often does the committee meet?

The committee usually

meets at least three times a year. This year, since January, the committee has met 16 times. Many of these meetings were specially convened to discuss and make decisions on important issues, such as the industrial action in Northern Ireland, the industrial action ballot on Guernsey, the COVID-19 pandemic and the RCN pay campaign. During the height of the pandemic, the committee also received

input from RCN's Executive Team.

What work does the committee provide

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Graham Revie (Chair)
Scotland

Tracey Budding (Vice Chair)
West Midlands



Carol Evans
Eastern



Neil Thompson
East Midlands

Karen Sanders
London

Michael Appleby
Northern

Denise Kelly
Northern Ireland



Mike Travis
North West



Liz Jeremiah
South East

Jeni Watts
South West

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