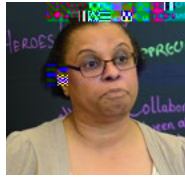


Becoming an RCN representative





Contents

Introduction	2
1. What is an RCN rep?	3
2. Do I need any experience or formal qualifications to become a rep?	11
3. How does being a rep impact on or enhance my career development?	12
4. How do I become an RCN rep?	13
5. Undertaking the learning and development pathway for RCN reps	14
6. How long does the learning take?	16
7. What's involved in each module?	16
8. What is the learning like? Is it very formal?	17

7. What'y

7.

Introduction

This booklet is designed to give you an understanding of the role and activities of RCN representatives. We've included information and case studies about each of the representative roles to help you consider which may suit and interest you most. You'll find an outline of the process for applying and an application form, along with information about what you can expect as you embark on your role, including learning, development and support.

We welcome expressions of interest from all members of the nursing team and we aim to provide newly accredited representatives (reps) with the knowledge, skills and confidence to become active and make a difference in the workplace.

You can also visit our reps' area on the RCN website, where you'll find useful information including short interviews with some experienced RCN reps.

Visit: www.rcn.org.uk/rep

We try to work collaboratively. It's not about who's right and who's wrong, raising your voice and going in for a fight, but about being professional and having a

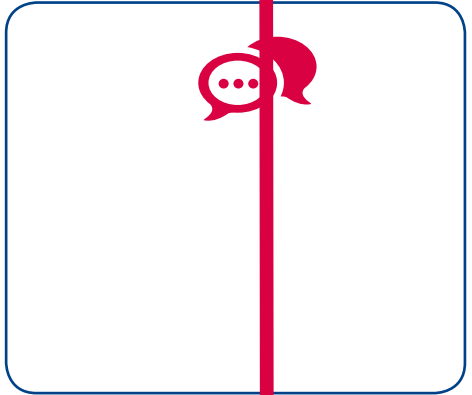
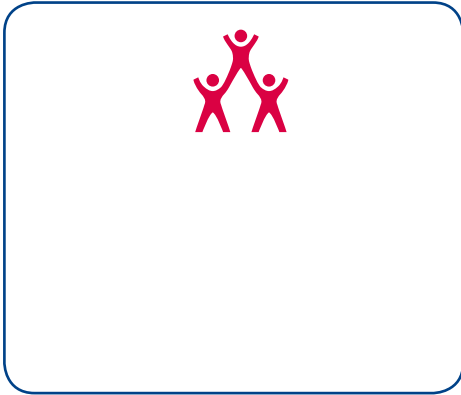
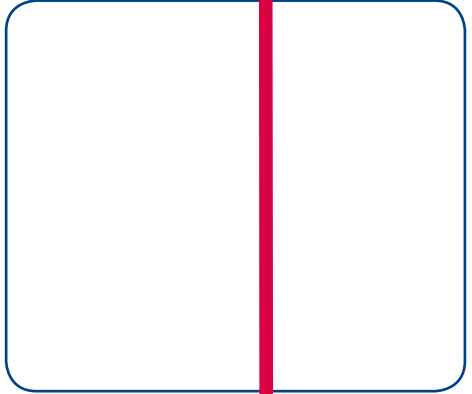
1. What is an RCN rep?

A trade union representative (rep) is a member who has been elected to represent union members in the organisation where they are employed.

The RCN has three types of accredited rep:

-

Model of active representation



Underpinning activities

- Working within the scope of your role.
- Promoting equality and diversity.
- Recording your activity.
- Developing your skills and knowledge.

RCN learning reps champion and promote the value of learning. They do this by offering support and signposting – assisting all members to plan, manage and undertake their learning in whatever way suits their learning style. They work in collaboration with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to negotiate, develop, protect and embed learning in the workplace.

A learning representative might:

- provide information, advice and guidance and signpost members to high-quality resources and learning opportunities

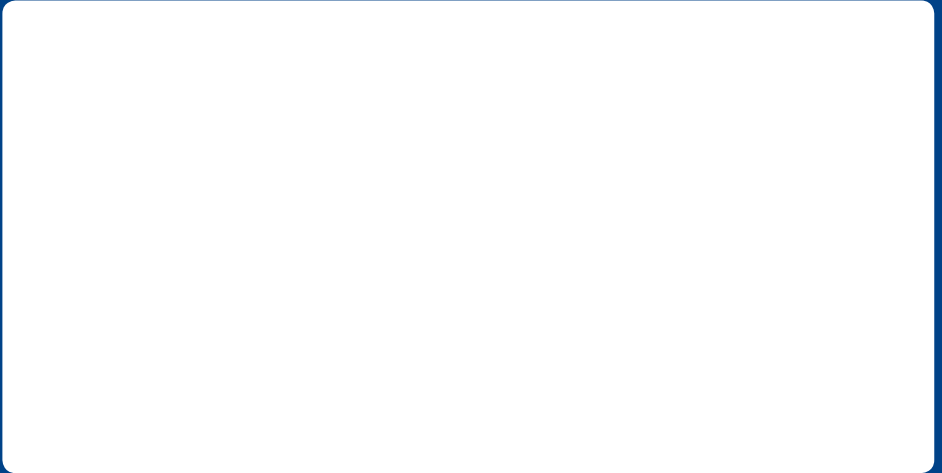
**RCN Rep:
Paul Brown,
RCN Learning Rep**

**Workplace:
Hertfordshire
Community
NHS Trust**

RCN safety reps encourage and promote a safe working environment, ensuring members' rights to a safe and healthy workplace by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to recognise and influence the management of risk in the workplace.

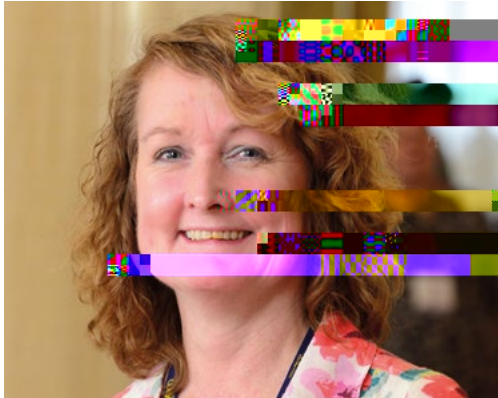
Safety representatives might:

- provide information, advice and guidance and signpost members to information and resources that support a safe and healthy workplace
- organise initiatives and support campaigns that help to create a healthy and safe workplace and culture
- support individuals with health and safety (H&S) needs, some of which may arise from cases where they are being represented by stewards
- carry out safety inspections and identify H&S issues which need and head



Role Descriptor:
RCN Steward





RCN Rep:

3. How does being a rep impact on or enhance my career development?

It is a common myth that employers and unions are always at loggerheads. In fact, most employers recognise the value of having reps in their workplace and seek to work in partnership to improve workplace culture.

As you get active as an RCN rep, you'll learn new skills and gain confidence in areas you might not

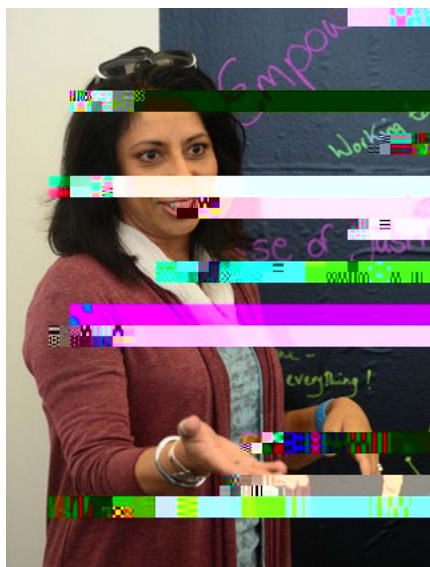
have had access to in your nursing role. Many RCN reps say that their role has broadened their career horizons as well as supported their professional practice. The learning and development which the RCN provides is second to none and it will really help you to reflect on your knowledge and skills and improve your confidence, whatever your role.



4. How do I apply to become a rep?

To register your interest in becoming a rep, complete the form at the back of this booklet and return it to your local RCN office. You can also complete the form online at www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/rcn-reps/register-your-interest-in-becoming-an-rcn-rep. This starts the application process.

Someone will then contact you to arrange an informal chat to discuss the role. This will give you an opportunity to talk through any questions you might have after reading this leaflet. It also gives us an opportunity to talk about the level of support you feel you have from your employer and line manager in terms of taking on the role.



If you confirm that you would like to go ahead and become a rep, we will then contact your local branch committee. The branch committee will be asked to ratify (or approve) your application and you will then be accredited as an RCN rep. The term 'branch' refers to all the union members within a geographical area. Each branch elects a committee, which manages the affairs of the branch. It is really vital that reps work with, and have the support of, their branch. This process helps start to forge those links.

Once accredited, we will write to you to let you know. You will be allocated a place on the next available learning and development 'foundation' module, which should commence within three months of your accreditation (see the next section for further details).

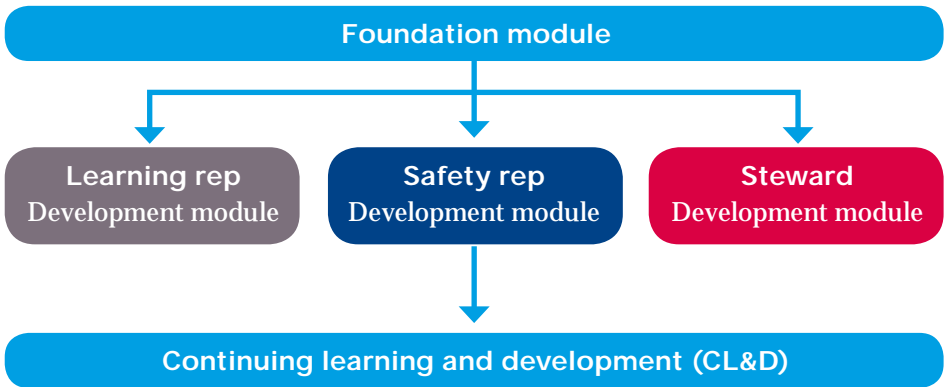
Where you have a recognition agreement, your local RCN office will also write to your employer to confirm that you are an accredited RCN rep and are therefore entitled to paid time off to do your role and to undertake any learning and development needed to gain the required knowledge, skills and confidence. If you do not have a recognition agreement, but you and your regional office have negotiated support and time off for the role, then this process might be slightly different.

5. Undertaking the learning and development pathway for RCN reps

The learning and development pathway describes a framework of activities you will undertake in practice and the learning needed to perform them. The 'pathway' element refers to the route you take as you

access learning that is relevant to you, your role and your area.

We've described the stepping stones to becoming confident and active in your role and tried to keep our framework really straightforward.



The **foundation module** is the start of your learning. It covers the activities that all RCN reps undertake to support members in the workplace and develop the RCN as a trade union and professional organisation. The foundation module brings all three types of reps together from your region or country. You'll be encouraged to plan your activity, have a go in your workplace, and come back and share your experience so that you can build your confidence and learn from each other.

You will then progress to a **development module**, which is tailored to the particular rep role you are undertaking. This is where you delve deeper into your specific role and the activities that support

a workplace culture that values learning, health and safety or good employment practice, depending on the role. You will often meet and work with reps from beyond your local area on this module.

Once you have completed the development module, there'll be a wide range of continuing learning and development opportunities, resources and events you can access to keep your knowledge and skills up to date and to keep you motivated.

As an RCN rep, you will be supported in your role by a member of staff from your local office, usually an officer who works in your area. They will



6. How long does the learning take?

The average rep takes around six months to complete the pathway, although this will depend on your own pace and commitments at work and home.

You should access a foundation module within three months of accreditation as a rep. The module takes about two months to complete. This includes periods when you are

back in your workplace putting your learning into practice by having a go at some of the activities you have learned about and practised on the module.

Once you have completed the foundation module you will be able to access the next available development module, which should take the same amount of time to complete.

7. What's involved in each module?

Each module takes two months and consists of four days of face-to-face learning and some protected time to get active in your workplace. You'll also have time to reflect and build on your learning so that you'll complete each module feeling confident in your role.

The face-to-face learning will usually be three or four consecutive days at the start of the module and you'll be learning and having a go at what you might be doing back in the workplace.

8. What is the learning like? Is it very formal?

During the foundation and development modules, you will learn in small groups in a very practical

10. Will the RCN support me if I need to make adjustments to my learning and practice as a rep?

12. How much time do I need from

13. When can I get active in my workplace?

15. What kind of support can I expect for my learning and practice?

Each RCN country and region has a dedicated learning and development facilitator who is responsible for supporting reps through each module. They will also work with your region and country to provide continuing learning and development opportunities.

You will be supported by a named member of staff from your local RCN office. They will help you to turn your learning into practice and to get active in your workplace. They are usually an RCN officer, or senior officer, but could also be someone from the RCN region or country with a specific responsibility for reps' learning and development. RCN stewards will receive appropriate supervision for the casework they undertake.

We cover all expenses associated with your learning and development, in accordance with the RCN members' expenses policy, in a timely manner.

A full Statement of Expectations outlines the commitment the RCN will expect of you as a rep, and the support offered to RCN reps. You will find this at: www.rcn.org.uk/publications. Please read this before you complete your application.

As you strive to make a difference in your role as a rep, there'll inevitably be times when you'll feel tested. But we'll be with you every step of the way, offering the support and development you need to overcome challenges and make a real and lasting impact in the workplace.



Which of these ethnic groups best describes you? (Please tick one box)
If Other, please specify.

White

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> Welsh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> Scottish | <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy/Traveller |

Other

Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White and
Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> White and | <input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian |
|---|------------------------------------|--|

