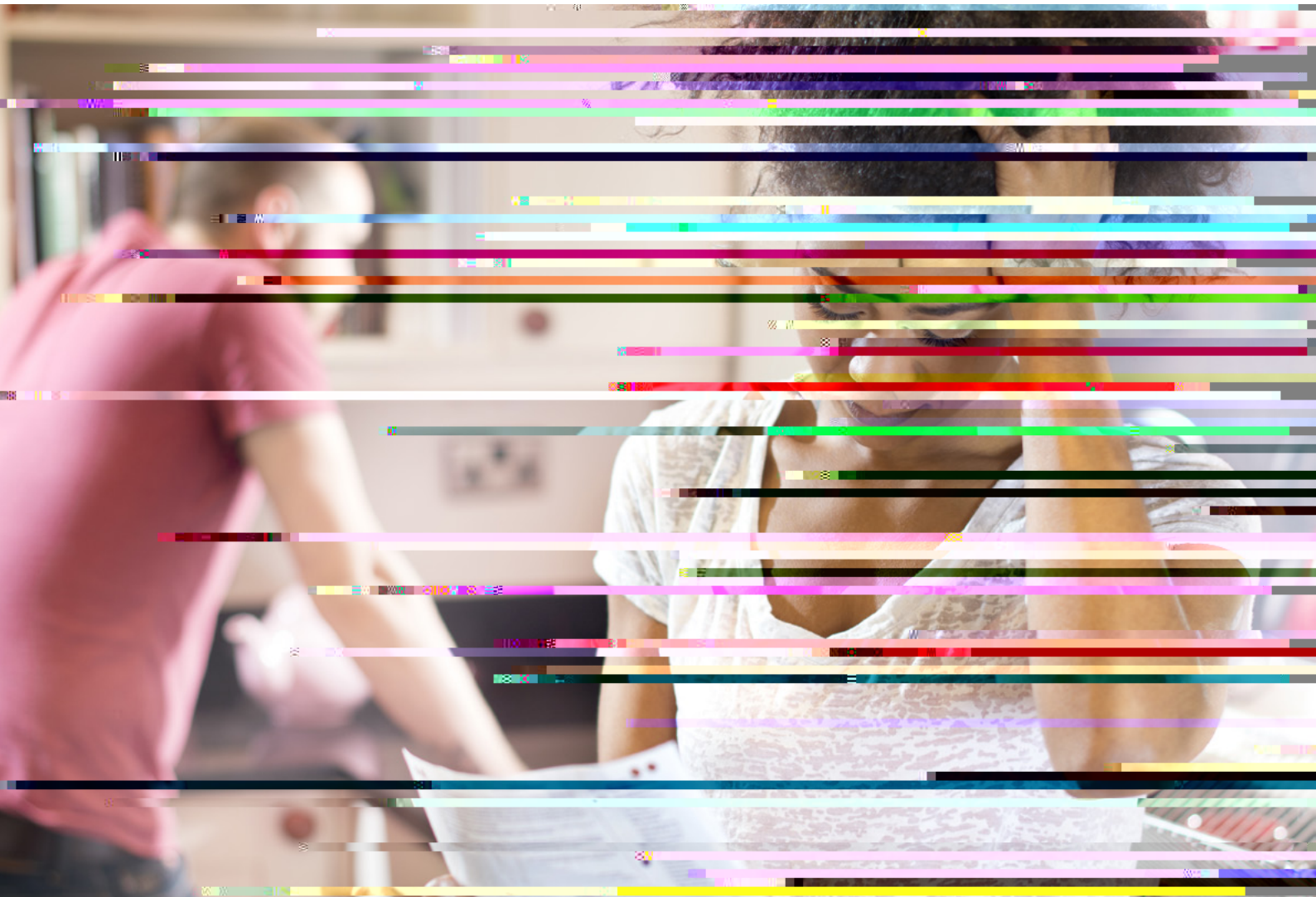


Living in the Red:



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London offers a range of opportunities for nursing staff: world class universities to learn in, centres of clinical excellence to work in, and a diversity that makes it a rich and interesting place to live.

But nursing staff in the capital are facing major challenges as London remains the most expensive city to live in the UK.¹

A lack of genuinely affordable housing – to rent or buy – and expensive transport, are just two of a number of pressures that are putting the squeeze on nursing staff and other key workers.

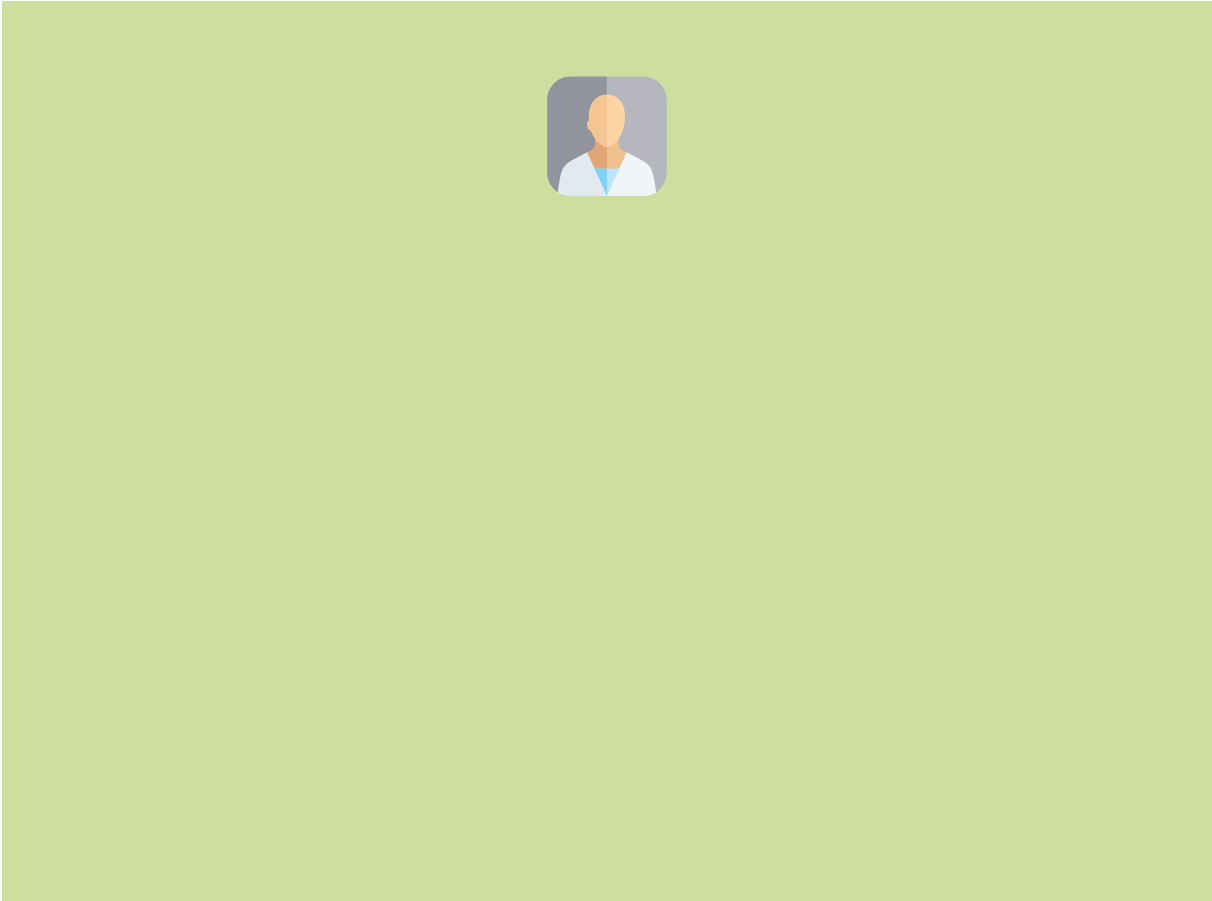
In 2016, we took the temperature of our membership in the capital. We wanted to know how nursing staff were managing to get by, and



79%

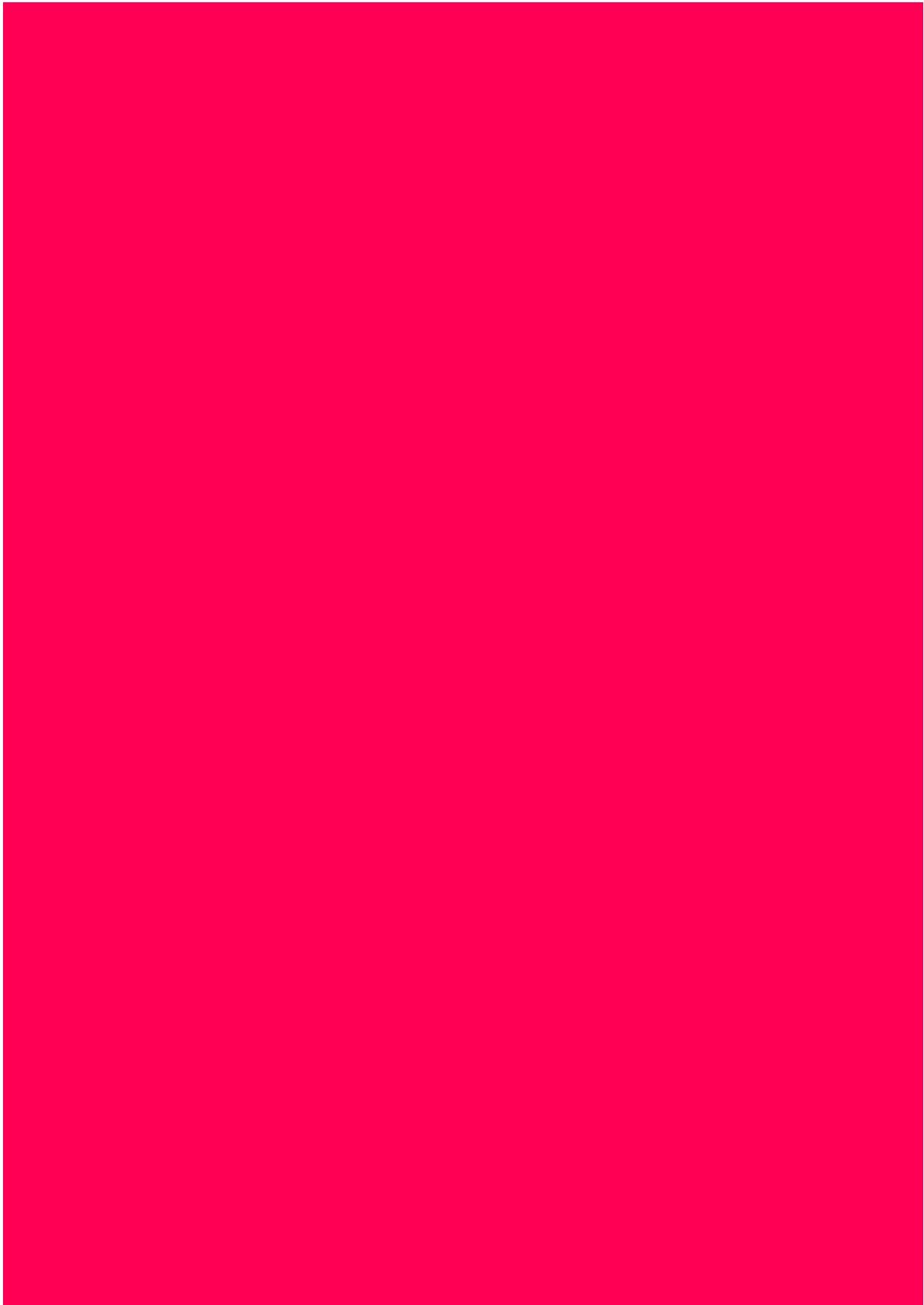
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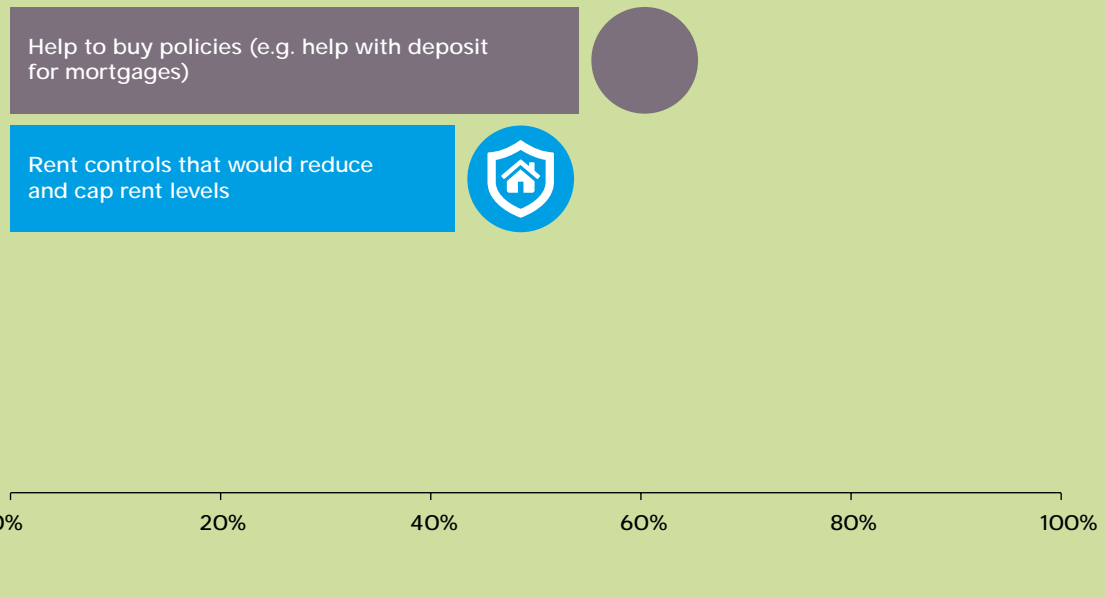


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When nursing staff were asked what policies would help them stay in London, they said:



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Recommendation 1 - Free travel for nursing staff

RCN London wants to see steps taken to review the most effective means of providing free travel for nursing staff that can support them to live and work in the capital and provide an incentive for employers to recruit and retain staff.

Public transport is one of the capital's most impressive features and RCN London's latest survey shows that 65% of nursing staff use it to get to and from work with 51% of that being made up by a form of transport provided by Transport for London (TfL).

The survey also demonstrated the extent to which nursing staff rely on it with 70% saying that they do not live and work in the same area.

Despite the popularity of public transport in London, it remains the case that its cost is placing an unnecessarily heavy burden on nursing staff.

Cost of transport was second only to the cost of accommodation as the most challenging aspect of living in London with 'discounted travel tied to employment' (73%) the most popular policy solution to help nursing staff stay in the capital.

However, up to now, there have been no specific measures introduced to mitigate the cost of travel for nursing staff, either by the Mayor of London's office, TfL, or other transport providers.

This contradicts what is provided to other sectors, such as those in the police force, who receive free travel, on all TfL modes of transport. Registered Nurses, despite having a specific duty in their Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) *The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates*¹⁸ to intervene should a passenger become unwell, have yet to be afforded the same privilege.

Recommendation 2 - Rent controls

RCN London is calling for the commitment made by the Mayor, NHS England London Region, Public Health England London Region and London Councils to review the cost of living for the capital's nursing workforce as a matter of urgency. A clear timeline for action must be published within two months. The review should include a clear exploration of how devolving powers to the Mayor of London's office to control rents in the private rented sector can support nursing staff, and key workers, to live in the capital.

The majority of the nursing workforce in London rent privately but rent prices in London dwarf those in most other parts of the country. In fact, across all regions, London has the highest rent to income ratio and is now the most expensive rental market in Europe. This is clearly not conducive to recruiting and retaining nursing staff, professionals who are amongst the lowest paid.

Compared with other parts of the country, in London a greater proportion of people rent their accommodation, yet this issue has never been grasped by policy makers, allowing rent prices since 2010 to rise more than three times as fast as average earnings.¹⁹ In 2015/16 around a quarter of privately renting households in the capital spent over half of their income on rent despite a third being considered 'affordable'.²⁰ The median rent in London is currently £1,495 compared with the lowest median rent of £495 in the North East of the country.²¹

These pressures, as demonstrated in the results of the survey, are not only causing hardship for London's nursing staff, but are also posing a direct threat to recruiting and retaining them into the future. This will undermine the health and care system's ability to provide the care patients need and deserve.

The widespread support for controls on private rents from bodies such as Shelter²², London Renters Union²³, and the New Economics Foundation²⁴, and now RCN London, must not be overlooked.



RCN London sent an electronic survey via email to 44,341 members.

The survey was open from 15 August – 15 September 2019 and was completed by 1,405 RCN London members.

After calculations, the percentages in the survey have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

If people skipped the question, they were not included in the data.

For further details about the survey and the methodology, please contact london.region@rcn.org.uk

- 1 Trust for London, London's Poverty Profile, accessed 23 January 2020. Available here: <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/>
- 2 RCN London, Housing Survey, June 2016. Available here: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/>

16 Griffiths, P., Ball, J., Drennan, J., Dall'ora, C., Jones, J., Maruotti, A., Simon, M. (2016). *Nurse staffing and patient outcomes: strengths*

