

Activate

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News, views and support for RCN activists



Patients left waiting as members battle winter crisis

The ongoing NHS crisis should cause the Government to “think hard” about how it approaches talks on pay, terms and conditions, says the RCN

The past few weeks have seen NHS services stretched to breaking point, with nursing staff around the country battling to deliver the best care possible in the face of mounting pressures.

Figures from NHS England showed only 85.1% of A&E patients were treated within the Government’s four-hour target in November and December, the lowest level since the target was introduced in 2004, and there have been reports of patients dying on trolleys in corridors because of overcrowded wards.

Prime Minister Theresa May has apologised to patients whose operations have been cancelled, but RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Janet Davies said health care staff were also owed an apology.

“This crisis was entirely predictable,” said Janet. “For years, too few nurses have been trained, and vacancy levels have been

allowed to get higher and higher. There are now 40,000 nurse vacancies in England alone. For years, the Government has underinvested in health and social care. That failure of planning lies behind this winter’s crisis.”

Janet added the resumption of exploratory talks on pay between the Government and NHS staff side was a chance for officials to “think hard” about their approach, and that there was a direct link between the current crisis and nursing pay.

“Squeezing the wage packets of nursing staff who are working harder than ever before leaves them feeling demoralised and undervalued. And for many, it’s the final straw that pushes them to take early retirement or quit the profession for an easier job. When nurses quit, beds have to be closed if there’s no one else to staff them.

“Until the Government takes the shortage of nurses seriously, ministers are likely to find themselves having to make many more apologies for shortfalls in care.”

Find out more about the pay talk on page 6.





A force to be reckoned with

ASK AN ADVISER

Maria Trewern shares her vision for her new position as Chair of RCN Council

I'm so excited about my new role and the opportunity it gives me to steer the RCN forward. It's my priority to increase the value of the profession and to ensure safe staffing so that patients receive high quality care. It's about having values, and not being afraid to do or say what is right. There's a time to stand up and there's a time to speak out – I believe that time is now.

Another aim is to make sure that the new trade union and professional committees are able to do what they need to do.

By Maria Trewern, Chair of RCN Council



You need to take ownership

I've been an RCN member for most of my career but until recently I wouldn't have described myself as "active". If I'm honest, I thought the RCN didn't do enough.

That all changed when I was talking to a friend, who said that it can only do what you ask it to. That was a lightbulb moment for me. I became a learning rep and set about increasing the RCN's presence in my trust.

When I was offered the chance to meet my MP,

FEATURE

Under discussion

How is the RCN approaching talks with the Government on NHS pay, terms and conditions? And what happens next?

Finding evidence

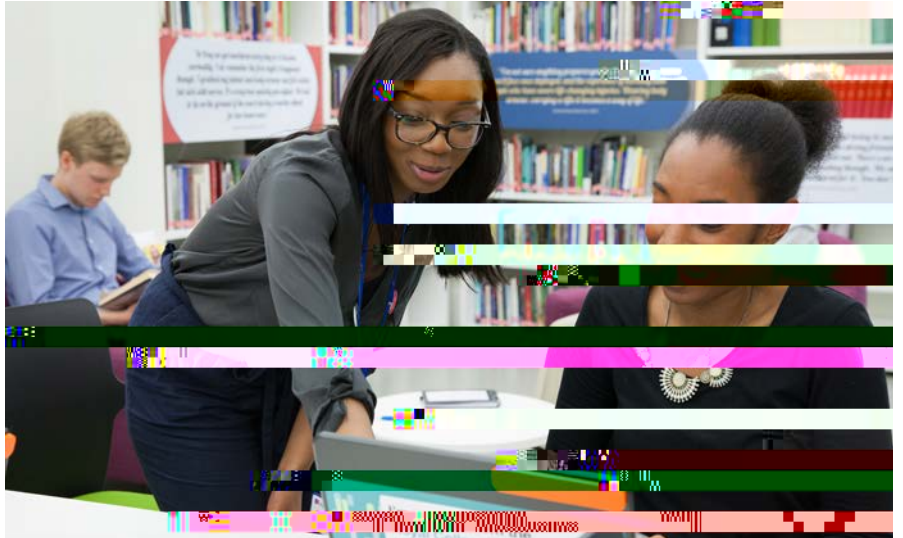
The RCN Library and Archive Service can help you support members. Here's how

When you're representing a member, no matter the situation, it pays to ensure you have all the tools at your disposal to achieve the best possible outcome for them.

One way to strengthen your case, according to Senior RCN Officer John Wilkinson, is to come armed with published evidence to support your arguments – and the RCN can find it for you.

“If I look at a situation and see there's a plausible way I can help a member to articulate their point using evidence, I'll contact the library team and ask them to do a literature search,” says John.

“I tend to find employers are impressed by it. It isn't just a Google search, it's something done by a qualified librarian at a credible organisation. A responsible employer should welcome that as an intelligent way of getting a fa



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NOTICEBOARD

Tools of the trade

The Government has published its response to the work, health and disability green paper. *Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability* sets out a 10-year strategy to transform the employment prospects for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. Visit <http://tiny.cc/improvinglives>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published guidance for employers on sexual harassment and the law. It includes advice on: employers' responsibilities; sexual harassment policies and how to put them into practice; handling sexual harassment complaints; and criminal behaviour. Read it at <http://tiny.cc/equalityhumanrights>

An independent review for the Government sets out what employers can do to provide better mental health support for employees to help them thrive at work. It recommends all employers, regardless of size or industry, adopt six mental health core standards, with additional, more exacting, standards for large employers and the public sector. Find out more at <http://tiny.cc/thrivingatwork>

An updated booklet from the Labour Research Department aims to support union members, reps and negotiators by explaining the complexities of TUPE, the new regulations and the latest case law. Access it at <http://tiny.cc/TUPEguide>