

## Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

4 December 2023

- 1 In her opening remarks, the RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair noted the resignation of Board member Paul McAleer, who stepped down from Board membership with effect from 21 October 2023 in order to facilitate his recent appointment as Chair of the RCN Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health Care Forum. The Board Chair congratulated and welcomed the five newly-elected Board members; Karen Craig, Connie Mitchell, Laura McClintock, Ann Butler and Siobhan Donald (who now consequently continues in membership at the end of her current term of office).
- 2 The Board received a further briefing on the RCN pay campaign in Northern Ireland. This included an update on progress with delivering the current initiative encouraging RCN members to write to their MLA(s) to highlight the continuing absence of a pay award and the need for the restoration of the devolved institutions. It was noted that all 90 MLAs have been engaged through this initiative and that associated member engagement events have been held in all HSC trust areas.
- 3 The Board received, noted and approved a series of governance assurance reports. These comprised the performance highlight report for the third quarter of 2023, an updated risk register, a report on the delivery of the Board's operational plan during the third quarter of 2023, and a performance management report for the same period. Matters for clarification were raised by Board members and addressed. The Board noted that the Agnew judgement has been added to the risk register because of its potentially significant implications for the work of the RCN in Northern Ireland.
- 4 The Board received a briefing on the various public inquiries in relation to health care issues currently taking place in Northern Ireland. These comprise allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, Southern Health and Social Care Trust urology services, neurology services in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, proceedings related to hyponatraemia, and the UK Covid-19 public inquiry.
- 5 The Director provided a verbal report on a number of high-profile recent events and working groups in which she has participated. These included the HSC Winter Summit, a roundtable discussion on health and social care transformation at the annual conference of the Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care, the Department of Health Reconfiguration Blueprint Task and Finish Group, and a roundtable discussion convened by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. The Director also referenced the forthcoming RCN International Safe Staffing Summit and engagement over the review of the Public Health Agency.
- 6 The Board received, noted and approved progress reports for the third quarter of 2023 on the RCN Northern Ireland branch operational plans. It was noted that all six branches have effectively engaged in the MLA letter campaign and that each branch has also recently held an annual general meeting in order to elect a new branch committee. The Board was briefed on continuing work to support the branches and enhance communication between the branches, the Board and RCN staff.

- 7 The Board discussed and agreed a paper outlining arrangements for RCN Congress 2024, which will be held in Newport from 2 to 6 June. The Board recommended that discretionary funding to support member attendance should be targeted at those working within the independent sector and newly-accredited RCN representatives.
- 8 Board members received a verbal briefing on current Department of Health consultations. These cover the potential re-introduction of hospital parking charges, further amendments to the HSC pension scheme, reforming the Northern Ireland clinical excellence awards scheme, and two consultations on addressing obesity.
- 9 The Board received a verbal update on issues relating to Northern Ireland members employed within the independent sector and GP practice nurses.
- 10 A further verbal report on the recent launch and implementation of the Prince of Wales Cadet Scheme in Northern Ireland was received, discussed and noted.
- 11 The Board received and noted various written reports on the work of RCN Council, the RCN Trade Union Committee, the RCN UK Professional Nursing Committee, the RCN UK Nursing Support Workers Committee, the RCN UK Student Committee and the RCN UK Representatives Committee.
- 12 The Board received and noted reports from the Director and the Board Chair.
- 13 Induction sessions for new Board members will be held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 and Thursday 18 January 2024. The next full quarterly meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board will take place on Monday 19 February 2024.