

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

19 February 2024

- 1 In her opening remarks, the RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair noted the recent resignation of Board member Perla Balmes with effect from 9 January 2024 and thanked Perla for her contribution to the Board. The Board Chair formally welcomed newly-elected Board members Donna Gallagher, Karen Craig, Connie Mitchell, Laura McClintock and Ann Butler, with Siobhan Donald also elected and therefore continuing in membership following the expiry of her previous term of office.
- 2 The Board received a further briefing on the RCN pay campaign in Northern Ireland. The Board noted that discussions are currently taking place between the Department of Health and all the health trade unions in relation to the 2023-2024 Agenda for Change pay award. RCN members will be fully informed as soon as this award has been formulated and will be invited to share their views on the award.
- 3 The Board received, noted, and approved a series of governance assurance reports. These comprised the performance highlight report for the fourth quarter of 2023 and the 2023 year end, an updated risk register, a report on the delivery of the Board's operational plan during the fourth quarter of 2023 and the 2023 year end, and a performance management report covering the same period. A number of matters for clarification were raised by Board members and addressed by staff.
- 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 gave a presentation on a consultation recently launched by the UK government seeking views on the introduction of a pay spine specifically for nursing staff working for the NHS in England. All RCN members are encouraged to share their thoughts in relation to this consultation, which is available via the [RCN website](#).
- 6 The Board received, noted and approved progress reports for the fourth quarter and the 2023 year end in relation to the RCN Northern Ireland branch operational plans. Branch Chairs and Branch Secretaries then joined the Board meeting for a wider discussion on how the Board and RCN branches can work together in the interests of members and how the Board can more effectively support the work of RCN branches. A number of ways to enhance communication between the Board, the branches and RCN staff were discussed and agreed. Following the discussion, the reporting template for RCN Branches will also be revised and streamlined in the light of various recommendations made by the Branch Chairs and Branch Secretaries.
- 7 The Board received a further verbal report on the developing arrangements for RCN Congress 2024, which will be held in Newport from 2 to 6 June.

- 8 Board members received a verbal briefing on recent Department of Health consultations to which the RCN has responded. These included proposals for the potential re-introduction of hospital parking charges, further amendments to the HSC pension scheme, reforming the Northern Ireland clinical excellence awards scheme, and a draft regional obesity strategy. In addition, a response is currently being developed to a Belfast Health and Social Care Trust consultation on its equality impact assessment of the service design and delivery arrangements following the planned decommissioning of Muckamore Abbey Hospital in June 2024.
- 9 The Board received a verbal update on issues relating to members employed within the independent sector and GP practice nurses. The Board noted that a Leadership Challenge event specifically for members practising within the independent sector is currently being developed. A further verbal report on the implementation of the Prince of Wales Cadet Scheme in Northern Ireland was also received and noted.
- 10 The Board received and noted a verbal report on the recent work of RCN Council and a written report from the RCN UK Professional Nursing Committee.
- 11 The Board received and noted reports from the Director and the Board Chair.
- 12 Induction sessions for new Board members will be held on Wednesday 24 April 2024 and Wednesday 29 May 2024. The next full quarterly meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board will take place on Monday 20 May 2024.