

RCN Wales Board

Minutes of the open meeting held on 22 September 2023
commencing at 09.00

The meeting was held in the RCN Wales Board headquarters, Ty Maeth, Cardiff
and via Teams

Present	Position
Jacquelin Davies	Chair, RCN Wales Board / Welsh member on the Trade Union Committee
Steve Watson	Vice Chair / Council member for Wales
Dr Carolyn Middleton, MBE	Welsh member on Professional Nursing Committee
Anne Stevenson	Board member
Catherine Jones	Board member – <i>via Teams</i>
Euan Hails	Board member – <i>via Teams</i>
Gaynor Jones	Board member
Kokila Swamynathan	Board member
Mark Crothers	Board member
Neil Thomas	Board member
Nicola Milligan	Board member
Richard Hughes	Board member
Susan Williams	Board member
Apologies	
Alison Magor	Board member
Lynne Puckett	Board member
In attendance:	
Helen Whyley	Director, RCN Wales
Nicky Hughes	Associate Director of Nursing (Employment Relations)
Sandy Harding	Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice)
Helen Carlyon	Finance & Business Continuity Manager
Katie Branch	Quality & Events Manager – <i>via Teams</i>
Heather Searle	Executive Assistant to the Director, RCN Wales

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the Open session.

Apologies had been received from Board members, Alison Magor and Lynne Puckett.

1.2. Declaration of Interests

The Board Chair asked Board members to declare any possible interests with any items on the agenda.

No further declarations were made.

2. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

2.1 Minutes from the previous meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 2 June 2023 had been circulated and were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 Review of Action Sheet

All actions were either noted as completed or updated on the action sheet.

2.3 Matters Arising

There were no further matters arising.

3. OPERATIONAL UPDATES

3.1 RCN Wales Board Chair's Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board Chair took the Board through the paper.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

3.2 Director, RCN Wales Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Director took the Board through the report and highlighted the following:

- The Chief Nursing Officer has now returned, and the quarterly meeting occurred yesterday. An address had previously been requested to send

flowers but this was not forthcoming, so she was welcomed back yesterday.

- Following the regular meeting with Judith Paget, Director General of Health and Social Services/Chief Executive NHS Wales, the Director RCN Wales agreed to join the Welsh Government Strategic Workforce Implementation Board due to the acceptance of the non-pay elements of the pay award. Welsh Government officials and Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) also attend this Board. Concerns were raised over the NHS Executive website which is very difficult to find information on and concerns regarding the senior nursing post on the new NHS Executive as it is only a band 8D nurse reporting to CEO of Improvement Cymru with a dotted line report to the Chief Nursing Officer. This post was not appointed to.
- Meetings with the Minister for Health and Social Services have continued. The non-pay elements of the NHS pay award are on the agenda to ensure regular updates are received.
- Meetings with Executive Directors of Nursing continue. The Director of Nursing for Hywel Dda Health Board, Mandy Rayani is retiring at the end of the year and the Executive Director for Public Health Wales, Rhiannon Beaumont-Wood has now retired. Both will be invited to a future Board supper.

ACTION: Mandy Rayani and Rhiannon Beaumont-Wood will be invited to the Board supper in February 2024.

- Collaborative ways of working with the Executive Directors of Nursing continue to be developed during bi-monthly meetings.
- Evidence has been given at the HEIW Stakeholder Reference Group regarding commissioning numbers. There has been a high level of input into this but very little has translated into the education commission. A letter has been sent to HEIW highlighting this.
- At the National Primary Care Board, the working clusters work is continuing to progress. The General Medical Services contract is up for review although practice nurses are not part of this contract. The Associate Director for Nursing (Employment Relations) continues to look at the practice nurse pay issue as many members do not realise their surgery determines pay. Money for nursing pay needs to be distributed in this area too.
- Normal activities are starting to resume following NHS pay dispute. Media interviews are listed in the report and the Plaid Cymru conference

will be attended next month and reported on at the February Board meeting.

A concern was raised by the Board regarding newly qualified nurses being prescriber ready. This is only a small area of theory and simulation in the degree course, which is not enough, and the reality can be quite different. It is important to develop a spiral curriculum where skills are being embedded in year one, so this thread goes right through the course. Staff need to be trained to support the students.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) agreed that a spiral curriculum is beneficial, and this is with the Universities to be signed off. Feedback has been received from students who feel there are barriers to being supported which is not acceptable.

The Board made the point that students may not actually have done any prescribing in their first year as registered nurses and there needs to be ongoing development in this area. The Board was advised that following a consultation, the Nursing and Midwifery Council changed the curriculum, so all graduating nurses are prescriber ready. Although students would not be able to prescribe immediately on registration, their knowledge of pharmacology should allow a more critical appraisal of their care. It is so important there are registered nurses with the right skills ready to teach and mentor students and this is being raised with HEIW.

3.3 Correspondence report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Director reminded the Board that correspondence is available to view by contacting the Director's office.

The Director highlighted the following correspondence:

- The correspondence highlighted in red have not yet had a response. The letter regarding the Specialist Practitioner Qualification for Learning Disability Nurses within Wales has now received a response via email with an invite to meet with HEIW.
- The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Wales was approached by the Welsh Government to provide an analysis of the recommendations of various mental health reports at Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board. They asked for the RCN to support this work and Catherine Gamble is undertaking this work as a paid expert. This is the first time an approach has been made to RCN Wales for professional work of this nature.

- An anonymous letter was received regarding Swansea Bay Health Board. These concerns were dealt with in Swansea Bay and appropriate steps have been taken. Nothing further regarding this letter is expected.
- The letter calling for the Environmental (Air Quality and Soundscape Wales) Bill to include a duty on health boards to improve indoor air quality has been discussed by the policy team with Senedd members, but no formal response has been received.

3.4 Policy, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Impact Report

A report had been received and was noted.

In the absence of the Policy, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Officer, the Director and the Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) highlighted the following:

- The Welsh Government consulted on calory count being made law and this would have included in-patient menus. Views were taken from mental health nurses working with patients with eating disorders and Welsh Government are now reviewing. This was a real success for the policy team.
- The care report was launched which was well received. Members working in care homes fed back how supported and valued they felt by RCN Wales and how the profile of care homes had been raised.
- The team led a joint piece of work on a Sustainable Workforce. This was the first time RCN Wales was the lead and involved the other Colleges, alumni, members and Senedd members.
- The team also led the Stop and Save project and coordinated views on behalf of the Labour party. The report is now ready for publication. This has been complicated due to differing views of organisations, but positive RCN Wales was asked to lead.
- Section 3.1 of the paper outlines the consultation reviews and the responses submitted.
- RCN Wales will be nominating the Director for a seat on Social Partnership Council.
- The Strikes Minimum Service Bill has now been made an Act this week. This Act outlines minimum staffing levels for strikes. There is a discussion in Wales regarding the right to make these decisions and how Wales is affected by this UK legislation. The RCN are very opposed to this bill.

- Section 6 of the paper details engagement with Senedd members. The Board was reminded to contact the team if support with engaging with Senedd members is needed.
- Political leadership programme has been facilitated and there will be further programmes next year. This programme is very popular and there is a waiting list.

The Board commented on how beneficial this programme is and thanked the team for facilitating the programme.

The Board expressed concern over the Strikes Minimum Service Bill and how the derogation process adopted already addresses this. The Board were advised work is being developed to lobby Welsh Government, but this is new legislation that needs working through. This may form an item at Congress or a future RCN representatives conference. Guidance for members will need to be thought through as would not encourage members to break the law. It is inevitable there will be future strikes. The legal team may need to look at test cases.

3.5 RCN Congress 2024

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board's attention was drawn to the following:

- Due to the increase in membership figures, the places in Wales have increased from 31 to 35. Each place equates to 1000 members and is based on membership figures on 1 September 2023.
- In preparation for the Congress workshop next week, the Board was advised to bring any ideas for the opening ceremony.
- There will be a call for volunteers towards the end of this year and the ambassador role is key. The volunteers will not be funded to stay overnight as governed by the HQ budget.

The Board enquired about the deadline for applying to go to Congress. The Board were informed that any member can turn up on the day but to be a voting member, funding is applied for through branches. The voting members vote on resolutions on behalf of the branch. Funding can be applied for just one day or the whole of Congress. Branches can also look at discretionary funding. The Board were advised to contact the Quality and Events Manager or their branch regarding this.

The Board raised a concern that members are not attending branch meetings and last year not all voting places were filled.

The Board commented that the roundtable with the Executive Directors of Nursing was very well received at this year's Congress.

3.6 RCN Wales Board meeting dates for 2024

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board agreed the proposed dates for 2024.

4. STRATEGIC UPDATES

4.1 Industrial Action NHS Pay Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Employment Relations) took the Board through the paper and highlighted the following:

- The outcome of the ballot was to accept this award but with a small margin. The main element of this paper is to show the extent of the engagement over the summer and the amount of work carried out.
- There was extensive coverage on social media. Targeted member emails were regularly sent. Cold calling, text messages and Thrutext were utilised extensively and were again targeted to members who had not voted. A live webinar was held which was sectioned up for social media posts. The frequently asked questions were updated on the website.
- Over 125 face-to-face engagement events were held across Wales which was phenomenal. Assistance was received from staff in Scotland and England. Promotional materials were used for engagement along with QR codes for members to access the ballot immediately.
- This was the fourth ballot in under a year, and it was positive to still receive a 40% turnout. It is important for RCN Wales staff, RCN representatives, Board and branch officials to all remain visible to members.
- There has been feedback and learning across the UK regarding all aspects of industrial action. This learning will go to Council and a paper will come to Board next year. The ability to scale up to support future industrial action is also being planned for any future industrial action.

The Board had no further questions or comments.

4.2 NHS Wales Partnership Forum Update

The Associate Director (Employment Relations) gave a verbal update as follows:

- The last forum was on 13 July 2023 in Swansea and next year there will be a meeting held in North Wales.
- The challenges with finance were discussed by the Chair.
- The Minister’s announcement for an independent group to look at whether the NHS is fit for purpose will be chased.
- The Director will be invited to the Workforce and Implementation Board. The rigour and challenge needed for this Board is not there yet, however this is still in its infancy.
- An update on the retention plan was provided and not all health boards have completed the self-assessment yet. There is a retention meeting this week and the group will then cease as it has achieved what HEIW have asked. Welsh Government and the NHS will be held to account to ensure implementation.
- The staff survey has now been pushed back to October.
- The Speaking up Safely framework and the toolkit and guidance was reviewed and will be rolled out.

The Board commented that the staff survey was raised at local partnership forum and there is a push to encourage staff to complete this online or via a hardcopy.

The Board enquired whether the work towards the non-pay elements of the pay award will be reported to partnership forum. The Board were advised that the work will be scrutinised, monitored and challenged at partnership forum. For example, there is a quarterly report to show the number of flexible working applications that are approved and rejected. The rejected applications will need to show whether another area could have accommodated, and all options have been explored.

The Board commented that the Speak up Safely framework is an important piece of work, but can be difficult to find the right balance of people. It has caused conflict where representatives also cover this role, and this has been stopped in some health boards.

4.3 Independent Sector and Social Care update

A report had been received and was noted.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) highlighted the following:

- RCN Wales continue to attend and participate in a variety of events which included the RCN North Wales Branch Independent Care Sector Conference.
- The care home project report was successfully launched online.
- A face-to-face meeting has been requested around the rebalancing of social care. There will be work carried out with the team in-house and the vision will come back to the Board. Roundtable meetings have started around the country with good attendance.
- There is work progressing on specialist practice services. HEIW have recently produced work on this with more places given to the Open University for staff in the Independent Sector to become trained nurses.

The Vice-Chair thanked the team for supporting the North Wales study day.

The Board Chair commented that the social care sector can feel left behind, and this support is excellent.

4.4 Notes and Actions from the 20 July 2023 Succession Planning Committee Update

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board was advised the committee had a lengthy discussion in terms of criteria and attendance at Congress which has led to the workshop next week.

The Board was advised that constraints for Board elections will be discussed early next year, and a paper brought to the Board in February 2024. The plan is to share this widely to attract members to observe a Board meeting if considering standing for Board, and to increase the voting turnout.

4.5 Update from Cangen Gogledd Cymru Branch

There was no attendance from a branch official from Cangen Gogledd Cymru branch. No apologies were received.

4.6 Update on Cardiff and the Vale Branch Plan

The Board Chair welcomed Linda Bailey for Cardiff & the Vale branch and thanked her for attending.

The Board were advised there had not been much activity in the branch over the last few years. The current branch Chair and Treasurer will be standing down at the AGM on 5 October 2023. The new branch plan will be to reinvigorate the branch and increase attendance.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) attended a recent branch meeting to discuss how to support the OSCE exams which Linda is keen to be involved in.

4.7 Update on Gwent Branch plan

The Board did not receive a presentation from Gwent branch and apologies had been received.

4.8 Update on Glamorgan Branch plan

The Board did not receive a presentation from Glamorgan branch. No apologies were received however it was noted the Branch Chair has been ill.

4.9 Update on Mid and West Wales Branch plan

The Board Chair welcomed Helen Williams for Mid & West Wales branch and thanked her for attending.

The branch has been meeting quarterly. Attendance can be poor, but geography is a problem. The branch utilises the email system to invite members and about half of the 3000 members open the email.

The branch has had speakers attend from Scanda Hospice, Learning Disabilities, Autism Service and RCN Wales regarding nursing standards. There have been several recruitment drives with international nurses and it would be beneficial to have more publications to hand out as most are now just online. The branch Facebook page is growing in numbers and members are encouraged to join.

The AGM will be held on 7 October 2023 and the branch will meet virtually in January 2024 to plan the year.

The Quality & Events Manager advised that the issue with printed publications has been picked up and will be fed back as many members prefer to have something to take away.

The Vice-Chair would like to attend the branch AGM as Council member for Wales.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS TO NOTE

5.1 Report from RCN Council meetings held on 25 May, 22 Jun & 26/27 July 2023

The reports had been received and were noted.

The Board was advised that matters have progressed since this paper was produced. Monthly meetings are continuing, and a proportion are in person. The Isle of Man are progressing with a statutory ballot. Different ways of working are being discussed and now that industrial action has finished, work will continue to progress with the recommendations from the Carr report.

The Board had no questions or comments.

5.2 Reports from the Professional Nursing Committee held on 27 June 2023

The reports had been received and were noted.

The Board received a supplementary paper regarding the latest update on the RCN education, learning and development strategy which links with the RCN Institute. The Quality Assurance policy and process was approved and there is now one process to follow for all areas with an educational element. This is available to branches too. The RCN Learn platform has been developed and can be accessed by members.

5.3 Report from the Nursing Support Workers Committee on 20 June 2023

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board were advised that there is still a vacant seat for Wales on this committee.

ACTION: The Board were asked to encourage members to take up this seat.

5.4 Report from the Trade Union Committee – June 2023

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board Chair gave a verbal update as follows:

- A policy review of support and supervision of stewards has been undertaken. The key point to note is this does not just focus on casework but all work that stewards undertake.
- There has been a name change to Health & Safety representatives and Health & Safety Committee, rather than just Safety.
- The Board were reminded to complete GDPR refresher training, and the library can be used for this. There is a risk to the organisation if this is not completed.
- The Committee has held a joint workshop with the Professional Nursing Committee to review the Carr and KPMG reports and the ongoing workstreams.

ACTION: Board members to complete and prioritise GDPR refresher training.

5.5 Report from the Student Committee – July 2023

The report had been received and was noted.

The Board were advised there is currently an open election and one of the Welsh seats will become vacant. These positions get a place at Congress, so important this seat is filled, and work is being undertaken to promote this election.

5.6 Report of the UK Reps Committees – February 2023

The report had been received and was noted.

The Board had no questions or comments on this report.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no further items of business.

The Board Chair closed the meeting at 12:15.

ET: Helen Whyley, Director, RCN Wales

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