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The completion of this review would not have been possible without the input and support of RCN members and staff. The Task and Finish (T&F) Group which led this review would like to express its appreciation to all forum chairs and committee members who, despite the ongoing challenges of workplace pressures due to COVID-19, continued to engage throughout the review process. The T&F Group is grateful to members for their advice and suggestions which have shaped the content and recommendations of this review.

We would also like to thank all members of the working groups, for the collaboration and commitment to meeting the workstream objectives. In particular, we are grateful for the contribution of the members and staff that were co-opted on to the groups for their particular knowledge and guidance, namely Yvonne Bronsky (Chair, Midwifery Forum), Alison Wileman (Chair, Bladder & Bowel Forum), Katie Bagstaff (Chair, CYP: Acute Care Forum), Carmel Bagness (Professional Lead, Midwifery & Women's Health), Adele Bird (RCN Learning and Development Facilitator) and Nicola Job-Davies (Acute Care and Leadership Adviser).

The contribution of the Forum Governance Group (FGG) and the Forum Chairs' Committee (FCC) and their ongoing engagement throughout the review is very much appreciated.

The work of the T&F Group was completed in the autumn of 2021, and the recommendations of the group have formed the basis of this report. The initial report and recommendations were agreed by the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC) in December 2021. The complexities of the review and recommendations have required further consideration in the context of the Council-led governance review, including the KPMG Report on Governance (the KPMG Report) and changes in the senior leadership team within the Nursing Department.

Some of the operational recommendations of the T&F Group are able to be progressed without further governance approval or additional resources, and work is underway on implementation of these recommendations which are attached at **Appendix 1**

The aim of this review was to look at and recommend ways in which the effective functioning of forums and networks can be optimised, and their professional profile raised to greater effect. To help achieve this, the review set out to define the purpose and role of forums and networks, establish a framework to support improvements in the ways of working, review the governance processes and functions and determine effective ways to

In December 2020, PNC commissioned a T&F Group to provide a framework and oversight for the development and delivery of a review of the forums and networks.

Five key objectives were set out by PNC as follows:

1. Define the purpose and role of the forums and networks.

2. Establish a framework to support transformative ways of working.

3. Review the governance processes and functions of the forums and networks.

4. Determine effective methods to optimise the resources available to support the forums and networks.

5. Explore ways to engage the wider membership in the work of forums and networks.

In summary, the scope of the review reflected the need to examine how the forums and networks may effectively function, how best to support the key priorities of the forums and networks as key professional drivers within the RCN and to make recommendations on how to gain the best engagement and interaction with the wider RCN membership.

The Terms of Reference and membership of the T&F Group (**Appendix 3**) and the Scope of the Review (**Appendix 4**) were agreed by Council in February 2021.

The Forums

There are currently 35 professional forums. Each forum has a Steering Committee of seven members who are appointed to this role. The Steering Committee elects the Forum Chair.

There was an excellent response to the survey circulated to forum Chairs and steering committee members. Over 50% of forum steering committee members and over 95% of forum Chairs responded to this survey. This survey provided rich qualitative information on how to improve the ways of working with forums. As with all surveys it is recognised that there were still some limitations to the survey.

It was recognised that this work was not exhaustive and that more detailed work would be necessary to further progress the implementation of the recommendations.

- National networks which sit under the structure of the relevant UK forum. There is no consistent operational or structural approach to this, but there are models of good practice that have clear lines of engagement, communication and collaboration. A good example are the networks aligned to the mental health and public health forums. Having aligned networks enhances the specific specialist focus and avoids duplication of effort and minimises confusion amongst members.

- Networks which have been established and maintained by RCN staff members or department (usually the Nursing Department) but do not have formal governance arrangements.

- Networks which have been set up by self-organising members, which have received variable resource from the RCN and have limited governance arrangements in place to ensure the aims, objectives and priorities are aligned with the strategic direction for the organisation.

There is no central repository that holds information on networks established nationally or at Regional/Country level. This further adds to confusion for members and increases the risk of duplication, lack of transparency and bureaucracy. There are varying details on the RCN website relating to some networks and for members it is confusing to understand how these networks or indeed forums operate.

- The accountability arrangements associated with the Forum Chairs Committee and their reporting arrangements to PNC;

- The process for disestablishing a forum or network including the approvals process and communication arrangements to members.

- The financial standing orders for the distribution of the budget for forum or network activity. This will include income generation from forum or network activity.

- Alignment to RCN Strategy.

The governance operating framework should be underpinned with comprehensive policies, protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) designed to support and facilitate the aims and objectives of the forums and networks. These SOP's should set out the communication and collaboration between forums and networks in order to avoid duplication and bureaucracy.

Develop a comprehensive Governance Operating framework that takes account of the areas set out above. The framework must be supported by a suite of policies, protocols, financial standing orders, and standard operating procedures.

Set out clearly within the Operating Framework the approvals process for establishing a recognised RCN network for either a practice subject area or a collection/grouping of members.

a. For practice subject areas their relationship with UK forums including the reporting and communication arrangements is to be described. The arrangements for establishing a National network (practice subject area) and a Regional/Country network (practice subject areas) must be clearly set out with the approval mechanisms described for both. All practice subject area networks must have clear links to the UK forum (where one exists) and no network should be established without initial discussion with the relevant forum who should be involved in their development from the outset.

b. For a collection/grouping of members, their relationship with an identified membership committee, including the reporting and communication arrangements is to be described. The arrangements for a National network (member grouping) and a Regional/Country network (member grouping) must be clearly set out with the approval mechanisms described for both. All member grouping networks must have clear links to an RCN Board/Committee or Council and no network should be established without initial discussion with the relevant Board/Committee or Council who should be involved in their development from the outset. Such networks may be set up as a first step towards the establishment of a national forum or set up for a particular purpose and may be time limited.

publications with a similar amount (37%) used to fund exhibitions. It is unclear why the allocation for exhibition funding is aligned with the forums funding. Similarly, clarity is required as to what department is responsible for funding publications and any updates, as this seems to be a historical decision to utilise forum funds for this purpose.

The review group recommended forum funding to be used to commission external expertise on a consultancy basis to enhance the work of specific forums. However, as the funding is allocated by FGG to these other areas mentioned above, there is little flexibility to utilise the monies in this way.

A further issue raised consistently in the review related to the annual funding cycle. This method of allocation means monies cannot be carried over to the next financial year and is lost to the forums if not easily applied in a non-recurrent basis. This limits the allocation and does not allow for long term strategic planning in the allocation of this small amount of funding.

While the RCN has a rich pool of expertise within its membership, it is acknowledged that there may be times when the expertise of others outside of the membership, who are able to commit to the time necessary to support forums to progress areas of work, is sometimes required. However, evidence from the member survey (62% of Chairs and 29% of committee members) suggest that forum funding of external expertise to

Reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Forum Steering Committee.

Each forum delivers their work priorities, aims and objectives through an established Steering Committee. These committees have a requirement for a minimum of seven members. The review found that forum members wished a degree of flexibility to be considered with regards to the number of committee members. This is due to the growth and size of some forum membership where some forums have a membership of over 12,000 members whilst others may have less than 1,000 members, whereas the committee constitution for each in terms of members is the same.

To apply to become a forum Steering Committee member, the individual must hold RCN membership of at least three years. Those participating in the review felt this is a disincentive to engaging with the forums. Participants noted engagemen Porums

Participants in the review also noted it is challenging to ensure respective workplans and priorities are fully aligned with the strategic priorities of the organisation. Indeed, the work of the forums and networks are key to shaping the organisations priorities as the voice of the membership is reflected through these structures.

Forums and networks are invaluable to the member engagement strategy of the organisation and there is much work to be done to ensure this resource is maximised to best effect.

The feedback also highlighted the wide-ranging professional expertise held within forums and networks. There are real opportunities to maximise this expertise in external stakeholder engagement as well as engagement on policy priorities with the media. However, work is required to ensure forum and network members are provided with the appropriate communications advice and training necessary to represent the RCN in these external environments.

There are a number of existing platforms available within the RCN to facilitate communication and engagement. However, it was evident these are not used to best effect within the forums and networks. The review group identified a range of existing infrastructures, such as forum webpages, newsletters, bulletins and Member Communication Channels (MCC) that are either limited in their value or could be utilised more effectively to showcase forum and network work, promote better collaborations, and highlight the benefit of forum and network committee membership to the wider 2 (o-1 (w)9.2 (i6 (t1.7 (a)T

This report of the review of forums and networks sets out the high-level recommendations

	Carry out a review of the governance and operational management of the budget associated with the forums, ensuring clear guidance is set out in the governance operating framework. The decision making relating to determining the overall budget should be clear and based on the priorities and workplans of the forums. The annual allocation of the funding on a non-recurrent basis should be reviewed, and consideration given to operating within a three-year financial cycle. The operating framework should set out the broad parameters for allocating the funding. Consideration should be given to ceasing the allocation of forum funding to both exhibitions and publications as these are core business requirements for the wider organisation.
	Consider the requirement for three-year membership as a minimum for consideration as a Forum Steering Committee member.
	Consider putting in place a process for succession planning for Forum Chairs.
	Ensure all recruitment to Forum Steering Committees adheres to the organisation's EDI commitments and is reflected in the Operating Framework.
	Forums and networks need dedicated communications support to ensure robust and timely communication pathways and means of engagement with the wider membership. This includes upscaling the use of digital communication and engagement platforms across the forums and networks.
	The forums and networks require dedicated policy support to ensure the skills and capabilities within these groups are used to best effect externally in the representation of the wider profession and the membership. A stocktake of the existing resource should be included in a plan to enhance this resource.
	Forum and network members who lead key work areas and are fully engaged in the forum or network should have access to bespoke media training including maximising the use of social media in accordance with the RCN policies and procedures.
	There should be a long-term campaign plan that is focused on encouraging and engaging the wider membership in the work of forum and network committees, and ultimately encouraging succession planning to these committee structures. A campaign plan should be developed by the communications department in conjunction with PNC and the Forum Chairs and Network Leads.
	Give consideration to developing a Forum Steering Committee member accreditation process and develop an annual plan of training, development and CPD opportunities to assist with career enhancement and revalidation.
	A 'Valuing forums and networks' toolkit should be developed building on the framework used to develop the 'Valuing Reps' toolkit.

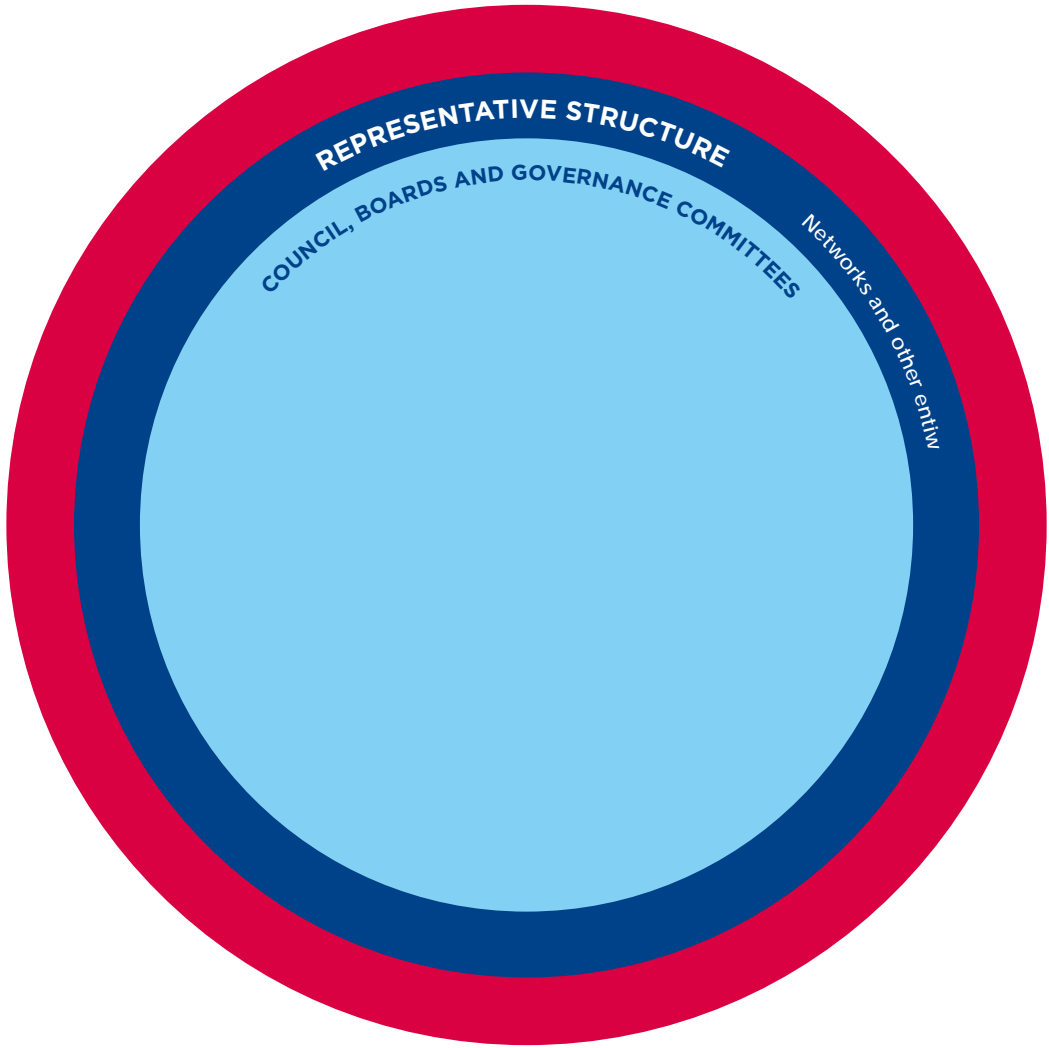| |
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| Detailed mapping exercise of current networks should be undertaken; their status should be formalised and aligned to the appropriate model. |
| All forum committees should work to the agreed processes, systems and governance that support their effective working. |
| A designated repository should be developed for all forum reports, such as their annual and representation reports, with a link to the forum webpages. |
| A review of the format of representation feedback forms should be undertaken. |
| Complete overhaul of forum to transform the forum information to a higher level within |
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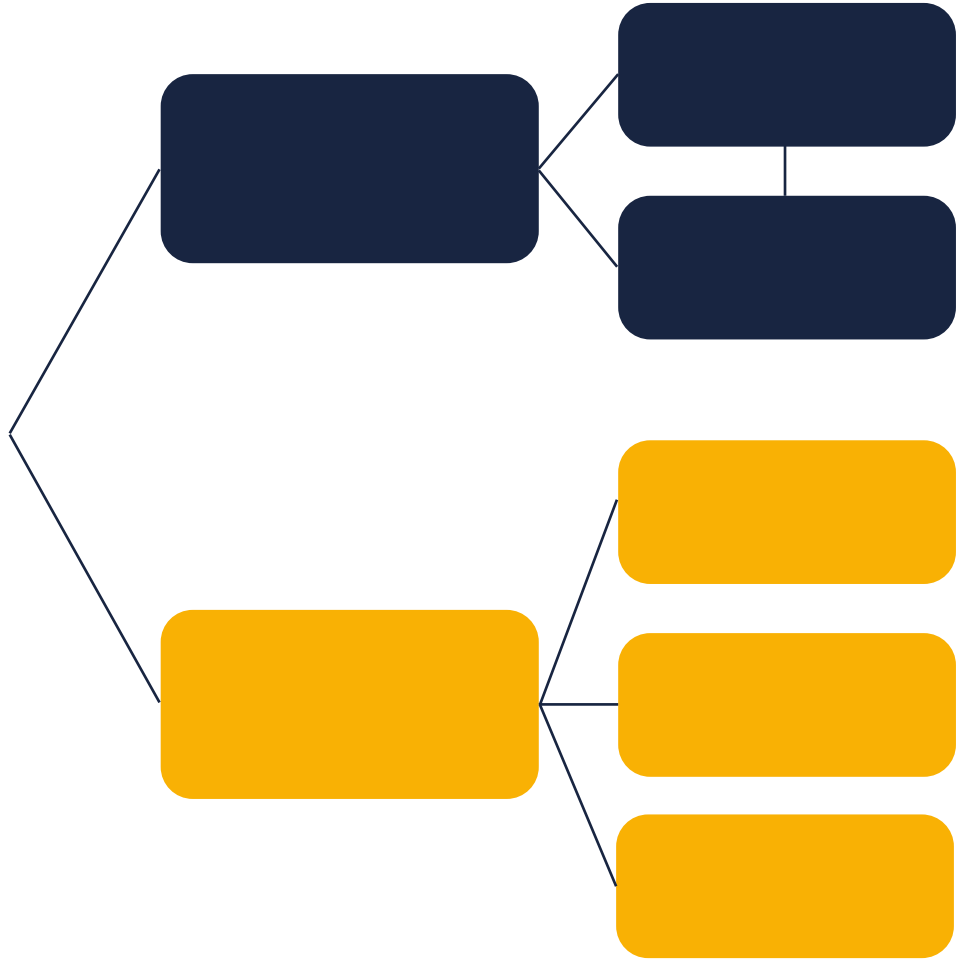|	
Review forums and networks	To include: • Define the purpose of forums and networks. • Guidance on the formation and dissolution of forums. • Review the mechanism for sharing key guidance with forum members - i.e. a central repository of relevant guidance.
Strengthen the FGG project proposal form	To include: • Guidance on the need for KPIs to be measurable • expectations for the project to provide information on the impact expected to achieve.
Project bid tracker to be updated	• Project progress to be reflected on the tracker. • Outcome/output details from the bid proposal to be included on the tracker.
A planning template to be developed	Planning template to be used by the forum committee to capture information relating to annual objectives and timelines agreed at the strategy day.
Skills matrix to be used as part of the annual recruitment process for forum committee members	This will be applied to all forums as part of the recruitment process led by the governance team
Strengthen the annual forums report	To include information on: • what the forum planned to deliver and what was achieved • additional activities in the year • the value and impact of achievements and activities reported

Aim

The aim of the review is to optimise the effective functioning and contribution of RCN UK forums, underpinned by robust governance processes. The review aims to maximise the contribution of the forums and to further support, raise the profile and champion the RCN's professional offer and activism in the College in order to advocate for nursing and improvements in practice.

Objectives

1. Gain a majority consensus view on the purpose and role of RCN forums and networks, how they differ and the criteria by which they are established.

2. Review the model for the configuration of forums and how the professional networks might align to the structure and governance of RCN UK forums.

3. Promote a structure that enables wider participation with the forum membership. Consider the mechanism for ensuring four-country representation across the forums and facilitate greater links with the four countries and the regions, as well as how to increase collaboration between the forums. Review how other parts of the organisation, such as accredited representatives, boards, branches, and RCN Fellows can interact/interface with the forums.

4. Identify a framework that encourages forum activity to be aligned to, influence and driven by the RCN strategic priorities and a process through which the contribution, value and outputs of their work can be captured.

5. Review the governance framework for forums and networks, this is to include:

   • the process for the establishment and disestablishment of forums and networks
   • clear articulation of the role and responsibilities of FGG, FCC and the relationship with PNC
   • criteria for the steering committee membership that promotes a diverse representation of the RCN
   • terms of engagement by those in formal roles.

6. Review the funding arrangements and resource allocation required to support the effective functioning of the forums, to include:

   • the funding cycle and allocation process for forum projects
   • the level of administrative and professional support by RCN staff
   • modes of communication and support to increase efficiency and effective messaging.

7. Assess the impact of any proposed change to the current forum arrangements.

8. Develop an appropriate engagement/communication plan with the wider membership and ensure their views on developments are considered.

REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURE

COUNCIL, BOARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEES

Networks and other entiw