



Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
London
W1G 0RN

Pat Cullen
General Secretary & Chief Executive

Steve Brine MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

By email:

08 April 2024

Dear Steve,

I am writing to share our in-depth response to the government's consultation on a separate pay spine for nursing staff. This proposal directly impacts our members, and I believe it is an important issue for the Health and Social Care Committee's consideration.

We believe the positive pay and career prospects we set out for nursing could be a significant part of the solution to the problems set out in many of the Committee's recent reports and evidence sessions.

A career of any kind must offer clear progression for all who want it – greater levels of reward to recognise skills, competence and expertise gained and greater responsibilities assumed. That ambition requires a pay and grading approach that acts as an enabler to the journey.

The RCN is broadly supportive of the creation of a dedicated pay structure for nursing staff. For twenty years, the Agenda for Change (AfC) system has failed to reflect the value and expertise of our profession. As detailed in our enclosed consultation response, a significant portion of nursing staff (75%) occupy the two lowest pay bands for registered nurse professionals. This underscores a fundamental flaw within AfC – the absence of a clear career progression pathway for nursing staff.

The practice of nursing has advanced significantly since AfC's introduction, yet the pay structure and workforce development frameworks have not kept pace. This fosters an environment where staff contributions at higher levels of responsibility and risk go unrewarded, hindering career advancement and ultimately impacting patient care. The undervaluing of a profession dominated by women like nursing exposes a fundamental injustice. It is time to ensure fair compensation and recognition for this vital workforce.

**Royal College of Nursing
of the United Kingdom**
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN
Telephone:
+44 (0) 20 7409 3333
RCN Direct 0345 772 6100
rcn.org.uk

President
Sheilabye Sobrany RGN
PGCert HE MA HE SFHEA
**General Secretary &
Chief Executive**
Professor Pat Cullen

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes
excellence in practice and shapes health policies

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver



Investment in the nursing workforce is an investment in the health of the nation. The RCN maintains that a new pay structure must acknowledge the advanced skills, knowledge, and responsibilities nursing staff carry. This includes recognising the essential roles played by both experienced and newly qualified nursing staff in patient care. Furthermore, any new system must offer ongoing professional development opportunities for nursing staff.

We are committed to working collaboratively to design a new pay spine that delivers fairness and rewards expertise. Our detailed consultation response, attached to this letter, expands upon these issues and provides evidence supporting our position. We trust you will find it informative and look forward to your engagement on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Pat Cullen
General Secretary & Chief Executive

**Royal College of Nursing
of the United Kingdom**
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN
Telephone:
+44 (0) 20 7409 3333
RCN Direct 0345 772 6100
rcn.org.uk

President
Sheilabye Sobrany RGN
PGCert HE MA HE SFHEA
**General Secretary &
Chief Executive**
Professor Pat Cullen

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes
excellence in practice and shapes health policies

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver