Patient Care and Professional Development for Nursing Staff in Care and Nursing Homes – A Research and Consultation Project

Research Context

There are a significant and growing number of nursing staff working in care and nursing homes. They are of growing importance to the delivery of health care yet we know little about them. In 2014 the RCN Foundation has decided to focus on the theme of patient care and professional development for nursing staff in care and nursing homes for its Project Grants programme.

The Board of Trustees has highlighted some of the questions and concerns that are relevant to this area (see appendix 1) and is now looking to commission a research and consultation project. The project will map the current care and nursing home landscape in the UK and assess the pressing issues facing nursing staff working in these environments. In doing so, a major outcome of the project will be a policy document that will direct the Foundation’s future Project Grants strategy.

In particular, the research and consultation project will address the following questions:

- What are the key issues in relation to patient care and professional development for nursing staff in care and nursing homes?
- Where and how could future Project Grants from the RCN Foundation have the most impact on the key issues identified?

The Foundation anticipates that research will cover nursing and care homes in all four countries of the UK and include consultation with sector experts, such as those working in regulatory bodies, statutory providers, charities and the private sector as well as with those from the nursing community working on the front line.

Scope of the Project

The Foundation is seeking applications from individuals or organisations to work with trustees and staff for between four and six months. Applicants will need to be able to attend regular meetings with trustees and staff either in London or by teleconference. The successful individual / organisation will be required to submit a report half way through the project and another report with a presentation of findings at the end.

As a charity we seek to spend our funds wisely: applications will be appraised using a best value approach and the maximum fee available will be £20,000.
**Applicant Specification**

The ideal application will demonstrate:

- Considerable experience of carrying out evidence-based research around issues in nursing.
- Experience of producing influential reports at a policy or programme design level.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- The ability to understand the nature of grant making organisations and charities.
- Experience of providing written reports and presenting findings to both nursing professionals and non-specialists.
- Understanding of the equalities issues around health care for all communities across the four countries of the UK.

**Timescales**

The closing date for expressions of interest is **03 April 2014.**

Shortlisted candidates may be invited to an interview at the RCN Foundation’s offices in London during the week of **14 April. (Please note that if you have not heard from us by this date your application has not been successful).**

A final decision will be made by **17 April** with the work commencing by **01 May.**

The project will be completed between **August and November 2014.**

**Next steps**

If you would like to have an informal discussion about the project please contact Dinah Cox, Head, RCN Foundation, on dinah.cox@rcn.org.uk or 020 7647 3645.

If you would like to apply to carry out this piece of work please send a CV, a cover letter and a proposal outlining your aims and objectives, methodology, timescales, anticipated outcomes and budget - including rate and expenses breakdown. (The proposal should be written in Arial 12 and be no more than three A4 pages in length).

Expressions of interest should be sent by email to Dinah Cox, Head, RCN Foundation dinah.cox@rcn.org.uk or 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN.
The Foundation’s Beliefs and Values

The RCN Foundation is a UK-wide charity set up to support nurses, midwives, health care assistants and nursing students. We provide bursaries to those wishing to gain qualifications and improve their training and grants for nurse-led innovative projects. We also provide hardship funding assistance to nursing staff in times of need.

The Foundation’s mission is to enable nurses and nursing staff to improve the health and wellbeing of the public. The beliefs and values supporting this mission are key to understanding our position as a funder: we aim to be relevant today and ready for tomorrow, focused on impact, accountable, ambitious and collaborative.

Current Project Grants

These beliefs and values have led the Foundation to fund some amazing projects since its inception in 2010. These have looked at a range of areas including patient care and staff development in relation to dementia and an international workshop looking at developing a paediatric oncology nursing curriculum in low and middle-income countries. The Foundation also contributed to the refurbishment of the Royal College of Nursing Library and Heritage Centre.

Please see www.rcnfoundation.org.uk for further information on the Foundation and its work.
Appendix 1

Points of investigation are likely to include some of the following:

**Nursing staff developing new ways of working** – If this sector is working in different ways to support a largely resident elderly population, how do nursing staff work to support this group of vulnerable citizens? We hear continuous examples of poor practice and neglect but little about innovative and creative ideas generated and used by nursing staff working in these settings; can this be captured and described? How would the Foundation support such work through its Project Grants programme?

**Workforce intelligence and deployment** – Workforce intelligence on nursing staff working in care and nursing homes is poor and inaccurate. Does the NHS suffer workforce losses as staff move to the independent or social care sector? How can this data be captured and the necessary intelligence sustained? Does this matter if the growing independent sector makes little or no contribution to programmes of professional preparation?

**Education and training** – University-based nurse education programmes usually focus on preparing nurses to work in hospitals after graduation. It is clear that significant numbers of nurses do not follow this career pathway on graduation but choose to work in the community or in the independent and long-term care sectors. Are education commissioners and providers alert to this? Do we prepare nurses and then expensively re-train them to work elsewhere? Is there room to commission community-based or care and nursing home programmes of education?

**Continuous professional development** – How will this sector support the necessary CPD requirements that will support appraisal and re-registration processes for nurses? Are there particular programmes being developed that best suit nurses working in these settings?

**Career pathways and prospects** – What scope is there for nursing staff to advance their careers in these settings? Is there space for clever workforce deployment and interesting new positions to be created; posts such as nurse practitioners or ‘specialist’ posts in care group companies? How would these roles support patient care and how could the Foundation support their development?