

Witness Name: Rosemary Gallagher  
Statement No.:2  
Exhibits: 11  
Dated: 4 May 2023

## UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

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### SUPPLEMENTARY WITNESS STATEMENT OF ROSEMARY GALLAGHER MBE

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I, Rosemary Gallagher MBE, of The Royal College of Nursing (“**the RCN**”) of 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN, will say as follows: -

1. I make this supplementary statement, about the RCN’s views on the UK’s planning, preparedness and resilience for pandemics, in response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry’s Request for Evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, dated 18 January 2023, in relation to Module 1 of the Inquiry and further to the Module 1 List of Issues received 05 April 2023. The facts and matters contained within this statement are within my own knowledge unless otherwise stated, and I believe them to be true. Where I refer to information supplied by others, the source of the information is identified; facts and matters derived from other sources are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. I make this statement on behalf of the RCN and confirm that I am duly authorised to do so.
3. Following a review of the documentation the RCN holds in respect of Module 1, the RCN wishes to exhibit the following documents to this supplemental statement:
  - i) *Letter from Dame Donna Kinnair, the RCN’s Chief Executive and General Secretary at the time, to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson dated 20 August 2020 [RG/85 – INQ000176053][RG/86 – INQ000176056] enclosing RCN published report “Building a Better Future for Nurses” [RG/87 – INQ000176038].* This report was written in response to the Building a Better Future survey which was open to all RCN members from 20 May to 17 June 2020 and which received 41,798 completed responses. The report highlighted how any vacant post, in any setting, threatens the quality of care patients

receive and compromises their safety. Prior to the pandemic, the RCN estimated that there were around 50,000 registered nurse vacancies in the NHS alone across the UK. As the population continues to grow and our workforce ages, without sufficient recruitment and retention this staffing shortage is only set to increase, and therefore further risks the safety of patients and public health.

- ii) *Royal College of Nursing written evidence: APPG for Coronavirus dated 08 September 2020 [RG/88 – INQ000176039]* which highlighted the most pressing and significant challenges nursing staff faced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including the procurement of PPE, staffing for safe and effective care and the unequal impact of COVID-19. In particular the RCN highlighted how since 2012, the number of registered nursing posts in social care had decreased by 15,000, which equated to a 29% drop. This suggests that the workforce was not prepared for a pandemic and the workforce shortages meant that staff were already working in challenging circumstances.
- iii) *European Federation of Nursing Association briefing note dated 03 April 2020 [RG/89 – INQ000176042] and subsequent update [RG/90 – INQ000176043] enclosing The European Federation of Nursing Association “We are not prepared, unless we are all prepared” 2015 report [RG/91 – INQ000176044]* which sought to identify the frontline workforce’s needs for capacity building in the European Union in relation to pandemic preparedness and management. The European Federation of Nursing Association represents more than one million nurses and over 36 national nursing associations across Europe. As one of the nine founding members back in 1971, the RCN has a long history of collaboration with the federation.
- iv) *Written evidence submitted by a joint response from Royal College of Nursing and others to the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts regarding the initial lessons from the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic dated June 2021 [RG/92 – INQ000176061]* in which the RCN and others voiced concerns about the sufficiency of current IPC guidance for COVID-19, the lack of transparency around IPC guidance decision making and the failure to engage with wider stakeholders and representatives of the healthcare sector.

- v) *Email from Written Parliamentary Questions and Answers forwarded to Rose Gallagher dated 04 March 2021 [RG/93 – INQ000176048] providing Lord Bethell’s answer to the RCN’s question regarding “what research has been commissioned to determine the potential risks to patients and healthcare workers of (1) short-range and (2) long range, aerosol transmission of COVID-19 in health and care premises which was tabled on 24 February 2021. The RCN was approached by Baroness Masham of Ilton who suggested tabling a question, after having observed the RCN’s appeal for the provision of higher-grade personal protective equipment (PPE) amid growing concern over airborne transmission of coronavirus [RG/94 – INQ000176060].*
- vi) *Email from the RCN to Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) regarding the RCN Independent Review dated 16 April 2021 [RG/95 – INQ000176045] in which the RCN highlighted how the Independent Review, as discussed at paragraph 90 of my first witness statement (M1-RCN-01), identified that the Rapid Review methodology undertaken to inform the UK IPC guidelines did not meet contemporary standards for the conduct of rapid reviews and consequently the UK IPC guidelines that drew on it had not been appropriately updated to meet the needs of the evolving pandemic situation, as it progressed into its second year. In particular, the evidence relating to airborne transmission, the ventilation of health care premises and the implications for the use of face-protection needed to be re-considered.*

The RCN is committed to working with the Inquiry throughout its investigations and we are happy to assist with any further requests.

### Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

NR

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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### INDEX OF EXHIBITS OF ROSEMARY GALLAGHER MBE

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<b>RG/85- INQ000176053</b>	Email from the Royal College of Nursing to Number 10 and the Department of Health and Social Care, attaching letter and report, dated 20/08/2020
<b>RG/86 – INQ000176056</b>	Letter from the Royal College of Nursing to the Prime Minister, sharing the Royal College of Nursing’s report “Building a Better Future for Nursing”, dated 20/08/2020
<b>RG/87 – INQ000176038</b>	Report from the Royal College of Nursing, titled “Building a Better Future for Nursing”, dated 01/08/2020
<b>RG/88 – INQ000176039</b>	Submission from the Royal College of Nursing, titled “Royal College of Nursing written evidence: APPG for Coronavirus”, undated
<b>RG/89 – INQ000176042</b>	Briefing Note from the European Federation of Nurses Associations, titled “COVID-19 – EU Lobby Actions and the EU Solidarity Mechanism”, dated 03/04/2020
<b>RG/90 – INQ000176043</b>	Update from the European Federation of Nurses Associations, for April, May and June 2020, undated

- RG/91 – INQ000176044** Report from the European Federation of Nurses Associations, titled “We are not prepared, unless we are all prepared!”, undated
- RG/92 – INQ000176061** Joint submission, titled “Written evidence submitted by a joint response from Royal College of Nursing, Unite the Union, GMB, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, British Dietetic Association, College of Paramedics, British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, Fresh Air NHS and MedSupplyDriveUK”, dated 01/06/2021
- RG/93 – INQ000176048** Email from Baroness Masham of Ilton to the Royal College of Nursing, with subject “Written answer to your QWA HL13680 received from Lord Bethell, the Department of Health and Social Care”, dated 08/03/2021
- RG/94 – INQ000176060** Emails between the Royal College of Nursing and Baroness Masham of Ilton, with subject “PPE”, dated 23/02/2021
- RG/95 – INQ000176045** Emails between the Royal College of Nursing and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland, with subject “RCN Independent Review”, dated 16/04/2021