Social care placements should become compulsory

Forum sets out ideas to tackle shortage of nurses in care homes

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Social care placements should be made compulsory in nursing degrees to tackle the shortage of appropriately trained nurses in care homes, according to health and social care organisations.

Warning that there are too few younger nurses working in adult social care, a paper by the National Care Forum and Skills for Care lays out some potential solutions.

Along with the introduction of care home placements at degree level, the paper suggests return to practice courses, the development of postgraduate training qualifications in care of older people and the skilling up of care workers.

All of these are good ideas, said president elect of the British Geriatrics Society Eileen Burns, but she added that the shortage should be viewed in the context of a general nursing shortage in the UK.

‘Placements for student nurses in care homes are increasing, but the process is patchy across the UK, and placements should be made a positive experience,’ she said.

Encouraging nurses into care homes is important, but can be done only if attitudes towards older people and the people who work with them improve, Dr Burns explained.

‘Some nurses think that people who work in care homes do not have the same skills as nurses in hospital settings,’ she said. ‘We need to get rid of this stigma and pay staff in care homes appropriate wages.’

Vacancies

There are 4,500 vacancies for registered nurses in adult social care, a vacancy rate of 9%. Turnover for nurses working in care homes stands at 35%, well over the 14% figure for NHS nurses.

The authors of the paper also call for managers to provide career opportunities for nurses in adult social care to improve retention.

Go to www.nationalcareforum.org.uk

SURVEY RESULTS

Staff want training to deal with abuse

More than one quarter of nursing staff say they lack confidence in supporting domestic abuse victims, an RCN survey reveals.

Of 1,455 UK nurses, midwives, healthcare assistants and nursing students surveyed, only 38% have received training in the past year in how to treat victims of domestic abuse and refer them for support.

Most of the 898 respondents, including older people’s nurses, had not received training recently. Yet 29% of nursing staff regularly encounter patients who have experienced domestic abuse.

Training course content included how to identify domestic abuse, escalate situations by informing safeguarding teams and recognise abuse among older people.

RCN professional lead for midwifery and women’s health Carmel Bagness said staff training is vital to address the assumption that victims are ‘battered housewives’. Anyone can be a victim, whether young or old, male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, she said.

‘Domestic abuse does not get attention because it is hidden,’ she added.

Family members

Nurses can be victims too, the survey highlights. More than four in ten nursing staff have been hit, shoved or pushed by partners or family members, while 51% said partners or family members had been verbally abusive towards them.

One band 6 older people’s nurse said: ‘I have experienced physical and mental abuse in childhood, and in my marriage. I feel confident in recognising the signs of abuse, and would reach out and help anyone who wants either to be referred or have someone to talk to.’

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