Funding cuts ‘would put specialist training at risk’

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Senior nurses have warned that post-registration training programmes for district and school nurses in England could be closed amid uncertainty over funding.

The Queen’s Nursing Institute (QNI) fears that government funding for specialist nursing education programmes, such as district nursing, health visiting and school nursing, will be withdrawn from September next year.

It also understands advanced practice, nurse practitioner and independent prescribing programmes will be affected.

Health Education England (HEE) made £75 million available for post-registration courses for 2016-17. It has yet to announce its budget plans for 2017-18.

Open letter
In an open letter to the government, the QNI said removing funding could make some programmes unviable, leading to course closures and staff redundancies. The charity also warned the move would have a detrimental effect on patient care.

QNI chief executive Crystal Oldman questioned how nurses would be able to gain skills to lead teams delivering care as it shifts into the community – an aim of the NHS Five Year Forward View – without the funding.

‘If there is going to be no funding, how will they create a suitable workforce for the patient need?’ she said.

‘Should funding be withdrawn there is a risk that there would be an immediate reduction in nurses undertaking post-registration specialist and advanced programmes.’

HEE needs a credible long-term plan for funding this provision

RCN head of education Anne Corrin said the government’s consultation did not explain how post-registration education would be funded. The organisation had sought assurances that post-registration specialist and advanced programmes would be funded from 2017 onwards.

A Council of Deans of Health spokesperson said: ‘HEE needs a credible long-term plan for funding this education provision.’

A HEE spokesperson said: ‘HEE will set out its plans for future workforce training commissions in its workforce plan for England, which is expected to be published by the end of December.’