IN QUOTES

‘The British Red Cross is responding to the humanitarian crisis in our hospitals’
Mike Adamson
British Red Cross chief executive
See page 12

‘Delivering safe patient care with a shortfall of 36,000 nurses will simply not be possible’
Janet Davies
RCN general secretary
See below right

WORKFORCE

Jamaica warns of nurse ‘poaching’

Health care in Jamaica is facing ‘major and severe’ consequences due to nursing staff leaving to work overseas, the country’s health minister has warned.

Christopher Tufton will highlight the issue at a World Health Organization (WHO) executive board meeting later this month.

‘A number of the bigger countries have recruited nurses from Jamaica, through various means, and this has created major and severe consequences for our own population and health care,’ Dr Tufton told Jamaican newspaper The Gleaner last week.

The warning comes as the chair of one Jamaican hospital, which had to cancel all major surgeries for a week due to a shortage of specialist nurses, accused countries including the UK and US of ‘poaching’ nurses.

University Hospital of the West Indies chair James Moss-Solomon said: ‘There’s a great saving in just poaching instead of training.’

International Council of Nurses director of nursing and health policy Howard Catton said that his organisation will attend the WHO meeting to make its own statement on overseas recruitment.

A Department of Health spokesperson said the UK was the first country to implement policies explicitly preventing the targeting of developing countries for health recruitment.

LEGAL ISSUES

Department of Health backs overhaul of NMC’s fitness to practise process

The government has backed proposals to overhaul the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s (NMC) ‘outdated’ legal framework, which could save more than £60 million over the next decade.

The Department of Health (DH) has given its approval to changes to the regulator’s fitness to practise (FtP) process, which will give the NMC powers to resolve some cases faster, taking only the most serious cases to a full hearing.

Responding to an NMC consultation on modernising midwifery regulation and improving FtP processes, the DH also approved the proposal to separate supervision of midwives from regulation. This means the NMC will be fully responsible for all aspects of midwifery regulation.

The DH backed proposals for the NMC’s conduct and competence committee and health committee to be replaced by a single FtP committee, dealing with allegations of impairment of FtP on all grounds.

It also backed proposals aimed at concluding some cases earlier by giving extra powers to case examiners, who decide on whether there is a case to answer. These powers could include the ability to recommend formal binding agreements, or undertakings, between the NMC and registrants.

The examiners could also issue warnings when there is no case to answer but concerns about a registrant’s past conduct remain.

These would stay on a nurse’s registration for 12 months.

NMC chief executive Jackie Smith said: ‘I have long maintained that our current legal framework is out of date and in need of significant reform.’

The FtP changes are expected to come into effect in July.