2.5%

Backdated pay rise agreed for nurses on the Isle of Man for the 2016-17 pay round
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LETTER TO THE TIMES

Leaders respond to criticism of nurses

The RCN and Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) have complained to a newspaper about a column that contained a ‘misguided and disrespectful’ portrayal of nurses.

RCN general secretary Janet Davies and NMC chief executive Jackie Smith wrote a joint letter, published in the Sunday Times on 30 July, responding to an opinion piece in the paper the previous week.

In a column on BBC stars’ salaries and nurses’ pay, Rod Liddle wrote: ‘Should anyone ever be paid more than nurses? They may know almost nothing about medicine but will empty your bedpan and mess around with your drip for a while, until someone more senior comes along.’

Ms Davies and Ms Smith’s letter said they ‘take exception when damaging claims are made about nursing’.

EXCLUSIVE By Matthew Mckew @Matthew_MckewNS

‘Savings from frozen posts raided for other budgets’

Money saved by freezing nursing posts is being used to shore up budgets in other areas, RCN Scotland said.

The college made the claim in a submission to the Scottish Government’s consultation on its 2018-19 health and sport budget.

RCN Scotland’s response highlighted how staffing problems are compromising patient care. It included early findings from the college’s review of integration authorities, the bodies established last April in Scotland to combine health boards’ responsibilities for healthcare with local authorities’ duties to provide social care.

‘That review identified some key concerns,’ the RCN said.

‘It showed, for example, that many areas are struggling to recruit community nursing staff and/or are holding nursing vacancies open, often using the salary saving to fund overspends such as in equipment costs. In some areas, there are proposals to cut registered nursing posts.

The government consultation asks for views on where additional resources are needed and savings may be made.

The college added that a continued focus on spending cuts will have unintended consequences, and that short-termist financial planning is damaging.

The RCN said ‘the link between staff pay, pressure and the ability of staff to deliver the quality of care they would wish’ needs to be recognised – especially the effects of the 1% pay cap in the NHS.

The RCN submission also reveals findings from the recent UK-wide safe staffing survey, which includes 3,300 responses from Scotland.

When asked what had been affecting the delivery of high-quality care, one third of respondents in Scotland reported a shortage of nurses. One quarter complained of a shortfall in healthcare support workers.

A Scottish Government spokesperson told Nursing Standard: ‘It is for individual NHS boards to plan and deliver high-quality, sustainable services, ensuring they have the right staffing in place.

‘We would expect boards to fill vacancies as soon as possible.’

Nurse Shirley Hannan, who started her career on her 16th birthday, has retired after nearly six decades. Shirley was one of the longest-serving employees at Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

rcni.com/Shirley-retires