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.

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