UKCC TOLD OF CONCERN OVER DOWNGRADING OF STAFF

Welsh HCAs recruited on ability to drive

By Pat Healy

HEALTH CARE assistants are being employed in Wales solely on their ability to drive, a conference organised by the UKCC in Cardiff was told last week.

Margaret Beckett, nurse manager of a nursing home, said community nurses were 'lucky to get a D grade' to do home visits. In her area, many were carried out by HCAs employed by home care agencies.

'Most of these staff are recruited on the basis that they can drive and they are mobile,' she said. 'Most of them have had no training whatsoever, but they are giving care to vulnerable people in the community.'

She said afterwards that the criteria being used were: 'Where do you live? Do you have two legs? Can you drive?'

Ms Beckett was commenting on concerns raised by Mair Fear-Price of the Community and District Nursing Association that downgrading of night staff is holding up urgent nursing assessments in the community.

She said many trusts were replacing G grade community nurses, who were required to carry out assessments within 24 hours, with D grade nurses. Therefore urgent assessments requested by GPs, hospitals and day staff had to wait until the following morning.

UKCC chief executive Sue Norman said it was an employment issue, but the root of the problem was money. She urged nurse managers to use the UKCC code of practice and guidelines to raise concerns if standards or the quality of care were put at risk.

A& E patient ordered to pay £450 for punching nurse in face

A MAN addicted to heroin who punched an accident and emergency nurse in the face has been ordered to pay £450 in compensation, a sum described as unsatisfactory by both the nurse and the trust which employed her.

Paul Clark punched agency nurse Lynn Brown after he had been admitted to Whipps Cross hospital, east London, in May suffering from a drugs overdose.

After the hearing, Ms Brown, who was unable to work for four months after the attack, said she was shocked by the incident and recalled the sensation of the punch for several weeks afterwards. 'He's got fined £450 but what good does that do me?' she asked. 'I have now started working at a GP's surgery - I could never work in a hospital again and nor could I face working at night.'

A Forest Healthcare Trust spokesperson said: 'This is very unsatisfactory. The outcome does not reflect the seriousness of such a violent assault on a caring nurse.'

Ashdown makes pre-election pledge to halt NHS cutbacks

THE LIBERAL Democrats have pledged to recruit more than 10,000 nurses or 5,000 doctors if it wins or shares power at the next election.

The party would also halt all closures for a year until a full independent audit into facilities and needs has been carried out.

Mr Ashdown, speaking after meeting nurses at Guy's hospital, London, also promised to cut waiting lists, reduce bureaucracy and restore free eye and dental check-ups.

From the left: student nurse Pat Carly, Liberal Democrat health spokesperson Simon Hughes, staff nurse Rebecca Dewhurst and Paddy Ashdown on tour of Guy's hospital paediatric ward.