Setback for launch of NHS phone helpline

THE LAUNCH of NHS Direct, the 24-hour nurse-run national telephone helpline announced in the NHS White Paper, will be delayed by up to a year, chief nursing officer Yvonne Moores has warned.

Health Secretary Frank Dobson gave NHS Direct a 2000 launch date when he announced the main themes of Labour’s NHS reforms in December.

But speaking at a conference of 150 nurse managers in Manchester last week, Mrs Moores said: ‘I am feeling somewhat alarmed at the moment because I have got the responsibility to get this up and running across the whole country by the year 2000. I am saying December 31, 2000.’

Mrs Moores told delegates NHS Direct was a ‘huge leap forward’ for nurses and offered big opportunities. ‘This not just triage, this is about giving advice, supporting people... and therefore working to clear guidelines and protocols.’

Three pilot schemes go ahead next month.

Mrs Moores said she had been ‘inundated with calls’ from nurses unable to work due to back injury, who were interested in contributing to NHS Direct.

‘The question to you is how are you going to be connecting your nursing services with other services locally to support NHS Direct?’ she said.

Mrs Moores told the conference that she would be writing to trust chief executives in March to canvass opinion from nurses on setting up the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Commission for Health Improvement.

The White Paper also calls for a rethink and update of a national strategy for nursing. Mrs Moores said she wanted feedback from nurses by July. ‘We have got to be part of the writing of that new strategy.’

Mental health nurse wins £1,000 award

REGISTERED mental health nurse Mark Holland has won the £1,000 North Manchester Healthcare Trust Nurse of the Year award for his work in helping patients with dual diagnosis of severe mental illness combined with substance abuse.

Manchester has twice the national rate of suicide and self-harm due to mental illness.

Mr Holland won the award for a paper describing the work of the Harpurhey and East Manchester Community Mental Health Service in creating and implementing a strategy for improving services for dual diagnosis patients.

ER’s supernurse is bad role model, says chief

NURSE HATHAWAY, the super-professional from Channel 4’s medical drama ER, is a bad role model for nurses, according to Jean Faugier, the north west regional director of nursing.

‘What we see is a fantastic, superb, capable, nurse acting as a nurse practitioner. Every week she has got a new idea. But what does she do about pushing things forward and trying to get on? She becomes a doctor,’ Dr Faugier complained.

‘Nursing is not about becoming a medic. It’s about taking forward nursing. It is very sad when you see these media images,’ she added.