OPTIMISM AS GOVERNMENT DECIDES PREVIOUS DRIVE FOR NURSE RECRUITS WAS NOT ENOUGH

Shortages force new recruitment campaign

By Adele Waters

A SECOND nurse recruitment campaign is likely to be announced by the government at the end of this week.

The national campaign will be a mix of new advertisements and those shown earlier this year, a government source has disclosed to Nursing Standard.

An estimated 8,000 people were attracted by the original campaign which ran in March and cost £1million. Potential recruits were attracted by pictures of nurses making life and death decisions or facing aggressive patients and a slogan which asked: 'Nursing. Have you got what it takes?'

Midwives and paediatric nurses have shown interest in having their specialty represented by the new campaign.

A government source confirmed that people who contacted the recruitment phone line had been traced to discover which elements of the campaign had been most successful.

One advertisement placed with the News of the World had received the highest exposure, he said. The most interest had been generated by the image of nurses using defibrillators, but that advertisement had been used more, he said.

However, as Nursing Standard went to press, it remained unclear whether the government would call it a recruitment drive or, like the last government, refer to it as an 'image of nursing' campaign.

A spokesperson for the RCN said: 'At a time of nursing shortages, a recruitment campaign is very welcome.'

But Unison said: 'I'm optimistic the government will recognise there is a recruitment crisis. The retention and recruitment crisis is developing day by day and we have put these comments to the new government.'

The government announced an increase in demand for nurses earlier this month with promised funding for an additional 1,000 training places for nurses, midwives and therapists, next year. However nursing unions are optimistic that fresh workforce demands will be met because the government has also agreed to exempt nursing students from tuition fees.

Clinical effectiveness and evidence-based practice must lead nursing into the next millennium, RCN president Betty Kershaw will tell nurses this week.

'Changing the way things are done is what nurses are best at. If the way we do things doesn't make sense, we change it. This applies in nursing practice, on a practical level everyday at work, and on the national stage,' she will say.

Dr Kershaw will open the College's conference and AGM in Belfast.

‘Serious failings’ in smear test fiasco

The long-awaited report into the cervical screening service at Kent and Canterbury Hospitals NHS Trust has identified 'serious failings'.

The report condemns the trust for ‘poor and confused management’. It claims a lack of accountability hampered quality control. Complaints about understaffing, poor training and low morale were ignored.

The investigation, headed by Sir William Wells, chair of South Thames Health Authority, was set up to look into blunders which led to the breakdown of the service.

In 1995 women who had been given the all-clear were coming to their doctors with the first signs of cervical cancer. This led to slides from 91,000 women being reviewed. A number of these women have since had radical hysterectomies.

Failings in trust management were identified, with managers seen as unresponsive. There was also a lack of training.

The report has recommended that responsibility for policing the screening programme should be taken by the regional offices of the NHS Executive.

There should also be clear national guidelines and standards. Trusts and health authorities should have programme managers to run every part of the screening process.

The trust was criticised for the way it ran the original inquiry and held the rescreening process. In June the trust's chief executive took early retirement and the chairman resigned.

The trust welcomed the findings as fair. Jim Smith, new chief executive, said: 'There are no excuses and I am not going to pretend that there are.'

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