Wales to go all-graduate?

By Rael Martell

WALES: 30,000 nurses, midwives and health visitors must have been slightly mystified at all the hullabaloo that greeted the publication last month of the nursing strategy for England, Making a Difference. After all, the Welsh strategy framework for nursing in the 21st century contains many similar proposals.

Media attention after the launch of the English strategy focused on one professional development issue – the introduction of new consultant nurses, who could see their pay packets boosted to £40,000. But both Welsh and English documents also include proposals for improved education and training. And buried inside the Welsh strategy, Realising the Potential, is the suggestion that nursing should become an all-graduate profession.

An all-graduate profession is intended to fulfil one of the five aims of the strategy which are to develop existing and new career paths; to improve care environments; to ensure a high-quality service for all; to encourage independent and reflective practice; and to demonstrate the value of nurses, health visitors and midwives.

Liz Hewitt, secretary to the RCN Welsh Board, welcomed the move to create a better career structure for nurses as well as the commitment to ensure nurses have the appropriate skills to deal with an ever-changing profession and advancing technology. But she also talked about the need for ‘flesh to be put on the bones’ of concepts contained in Realising the Potential.

The need for clarification was echoed by Unison’s senior regional officer for Wales Jean Brady, who said the union was firmly opposed to making nursing an all-graduate profession.

‘While Unison welcomes the rest of the document the strategy does not appear to contain evidence to support the benefit of an all-graduate profession. This scenario would also exclude health care assistants from having a career in nursing,’ she said.

Copies of Realising the Potential can be obtained from Philip Johnson, Nursing Division, Welsh Office. Tel: 01222 823918

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realising the potential