**High numbers leaving in late 30s**

THE PEAK ages for nurses, midwives and health visitors to leave the UKCC register are 35 to 39 and 60 to 64, according to the latest figures from the council.

The UKCC says this is ‘good and bad news’ for employers. The good news is that the peak ages for retirement are 60 to 64 rather than 55 to 59, when nurses, midwives and health visitors are entitled to retire.

But the bad news is that many practitioners appear to come off the register after around ten years in work.

RCN senior employment relations officer John Humphrys said: ‘These figures are extremely interesting and must be a concern given that that age group will contain high numbers of very experienced nurses.’

Unison head of nursing Karen Jennings said: ‘What we need is some sort of questionnaire for those leaving the register to establish why they are leaving.

‘The late-30s age group is later than the age for having a family, so we need to find out the reasons behind it.’

**Play it safe in the sun**

Health promotion specialist, nurse Amanda Fletcher, explains the importance of protecting skin from the sun to four-year-old Courtney Wheeler. They were at the launch of a ‘Keep Your Top On’ campaign in West Yorkshire.

**Jobs in jeopardy without better nursing care funding**

**By Colin Parish**

CARE HOMES will be forced to employ fewer nurses unless the government allows the NHS to pay more towards the cost of nursing care, a leading healthcare analyst said last week.

William Laing issued the warning based on his prediction that, on average, the government will cover only the first £50 spent on a resident’s nursing care each week.

It is widely expected that patients will be put in one of four bands that reflect the level of nursing care they need. The care home will then receive £25, £50, £75 or £100 a week towards the cost of the nursing care.

Mr Laing, managing director of healthcare analysts Laing & Buisson, said the low level of funding would lead to the skill mix in care homes being diluted.

He said this in turn would mean the new National Care Standards Commission, which will regulate the sector, would have to alter its requirements for nursing input in nursing homes to match what the NHS says it will pay for.

But he said the silver lining is that the nurses affected would be available to help the health service overcome its shortages. And the money home owners saved would mean they again became profitable, while local authorities would not have to pay increased fees.

By Colin Parish

**In brief**

People with mental health problems face severe discrimination when seeking work and in the workplace, according to a leading employment think-tank. The Industrial Society based its view on the findings of a survey it conducted on attitudes to mental health in the workplace. In a report on the findings, the society says discrimination based on mental health is widespread.

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Racism in nursing is resulting in a ‘criminal waste of talent’ and worsening recruitment difficulties for the profession, according to the author of a report on racism in medicine. King’s Fund director of race and diversity Naaz Coker said 8 per cent of nurses are from black and ethnic minority communities, but only 1 per cent of them work at an executive level. Racism in Medicine: An Agenda for Change is available from the King’s Fund on 020 7307 2591, price £15.99.

**No plans to publish register**

THE HEALTH department has scotched suggestions that it plans to make nurses’ addresses available to the public.

Shadow Nursing and Midwifery Council president Jonathan Asbridge had feared the government wanted to publish the register, putting nurses at risk of being stalked, but the health department said it had never planned such a publication. A spokesperson said: ‘It will be for the new council to decide what details appear on the register.’

Mr Asbridge confirmed he had received this clarification, and added added: ‘It is clear that the NMC will have the flexibility to make public only what is absolutely necessary.’

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