IN BRIEF

NHS trusts in England have been told how they can save money and enhance patient care by improving care pathways for patients with common complaints. The NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement issued guidance on treating patients requiring gallbladder removal or a Caesarean section last week. Over the next two months it will issue advice on fractured neck of femur, acute stroke and hip or knee replacements. For further information go to www.institute.nhs.uk/focus_on_high_volume_care

A multi-faith support guide aimed at healthcare workers was published last week as part of Scottish Inter Faith Week. The guide is designed to help staff be more aware and sensitive to the needs of diverse faith and belief groups. Chief nursing officer Paul Martin said: ‘Scotland is a country of many faiths and cultures and the population benefits greatly from care that is appropriate and sensitive.’ Copies are available from www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/publications

Five nurses have been funded by Cancer Research and the government to run cancer clinical trials across Northern Ireland. The nurses will co-ordinate and help manage trials in breast, lung, colorectal, prostate, bladder and haematological cancers. Funding has been confirmed for six years. ‘These nurses will provide information, care and support for cancer patients who want to take part in a clinical trial based close to their home,’ said Ruth Boyd, senior cancer nurse at Belfast City Hospital.

A scheme that allows staff to donate the ‘pennies’ of their monthly salaries to local hospices has been introduced by an NHS trust. The Pennies from Heaven scheme works by staff opting in to the scheme and donating the pennies, up to maximum of 99p, from their payslips. The money raised at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust will go to the East Anglia Children’s Hospices. If all NHS staff joined similar schemes, £8.7 million would be raised a year.

The Professional Footballers’ Association (PFA) is backing a campaign against the sudden closure of nursing and residential care homes. PFA representatives handed in a letter to 10 Downing Street last week calling for a change in the law to stop homes closing at short notice and evicting their residents. The campaign is led by Ken Mack from Wrexham, whose mother-in-law died soon after being moved out of a care home.

Former RCN president Sylvia Denton has become chair of Attend, a charity that promotes volunteering in health and social care. She replaces Sue Norman, former chief executive of the UKCC, which was nursing’s regulatory body between 1983 and 2002. ‘I bring a belief in the altruism that is too often lacking in society today,’ Ms Denton said. Attend was previously known as the National Association of Hospital and Community Friends.

Mental health nurse Ben Thomas has been appointed safer practice lead by the National Patient Safety Agency. Dr Thomas, pictured, will be responsible for assessing the safety needs of mental health service users across England. ‘We need a national system of safety improvement so that service users and their carers have confidence in their care,’ he said.

STRIKE THREAT BY NURSES TOLD TO REAPPLY FOR JOBS

Forty band seven nurses at an NHS trust face having to apply for their own jobs after ten posts were cut following a skill-mix review.

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust is trying to cut the number of band seven posts ‘to improve efficiency’. It has told nursing staff that formal interviews for those wishing to reapply for their jobs will start on January 4.

The trust has pledged there will be no compulsory redundancies, but a Royal Shrewsbury Hospital nurse, who requested anonymity, said her colleagues are furious and are considering industrial action.

Financial errors

‘We feel we are carrying the buck for the serious financial mistakes made by the trust’s senior management,’ she said. ‘The shocking thing this time is that nurses are talking about striking, I have never heard of that before, but they feel so outraged.’

RCN West Midlands regional director Ann Leedham-Smith said: ‘The RCN would only support industrial action as a last resort. That Shropshire nurses are threatening to strike indicates the seriousness of the situation and a breakdown in communication between senior staff and nurses.

‘This needs to be rectified at the earliest opportunity to avoid disruption to patient care.’

Head of nursing Helen Coleman said staff had been involved in a skill-mix review that concluded the trust employed too many band seven nurses and too few on lower grades.

Around 40 nurses would be invited to apply for around 30 posts, with the unsuccessful candidates offered jobs on lower pay bands. The decision was not because of the deficit, she said.

‘Even if we were not in deficit I believe this is the right thing to do.’