in vain’

Commission members

Chair
Ann Keen health minister and former nurse

Members
Gail Adams head of nursing, Unison
Dame Chris Beasley chief nursing officer for England
James Buchan professor, faculty of health and social sciences, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Peter Carter general secretary, RCN
Baroness Audrey Emerton former nurse and House of Lords cross bench peer
Judith Griffin chief executive, NHS Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire
Dame Donna Kinnair director of nursing and head of integrated children’s commissioning, NHS Southwark, London
Heather Lawrence chief executive, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Jo Pritchard joint managing director, Central Surrey Health
Anne-Marie Rafferty dean of the Florence Nightingale School for Nursing and Midwifery, King’s College London
Claire Rayner president, Patients Association
Jane Salvage visiting professor, Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery, King’s College London
Janice Sigsworth nurse director, Imperial College London Healthcare NHS Trust
Eileen Sills chief nurse, Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust, London
Tamar Thompson director of strategic partnerships, NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement
Cathy Warwick general secretary, Royal College of Midwives

MIDWIVES ARE UNDER TOO MUCH PRESSURE, PRIME MINISTER TOLD

A midwife tackled prime minister Gordon Brown on staffing shortages and soaring birth rates at the launch of his Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery at King’s College Hospital in south London.

One of the hospital’s midwives Curlette Beckmann told Mr Brown that these pressures, including a rise in the number of complicated births, meant midwives were unable to meet expectations of mothers and clinicians.

She added that attempts to offer mothers ante and postnatal classes in the community were being hampered by a lack of facilities. A Downing Street official told Nursing Standard that Mr Brown had asked his strategy unit to look into Ms Beckmann’s concerns.

During the hospital visit, Mr Brown was also told about problems delivering coagulation care. Nurse specialist Lynda Bonner told Mr Brown that some nurses are prevented from using the best products because of cost.

She added that funding pressures mean hospitals are also struggling to introduce venous thromboembolism risk assessments for all patients.

Ms Bonner said more funding is required so hospitals can employ prophylaxis nurses. But her plea for extra funding was met with laughter from Mr Brown, health minister Ann Keen and health secretary Alan Johnson, who accompanied him on the visit.

Entrepreneurs’ course is axed

A flagship course designed to bolster the number of entrepreneurial nurses setting up their own businesses has been dropped after running just twice.

The move coincides with the launch last week of the Prime Minister’s Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery, which will look at ways of giving nurses and midwives more freedom to manage their own services.

The Social Entrepreneurs Working in Healthcare course was initially funded by the Department of Health (DH) when it was first run at University of Oxford’s Said Business School in 2006/07.

Attendees included nurse Jo Pritchard, a member of the prime minister’s commission who co-founded the Central Surrey Health social enterprise with Tricia McGregor. Ms McGregor said the programme had been ‘very helpful’. The course was repeated in 2007/08 but attendees had to pay £2,000 in fees after DH funding was cut. A business school spokesperson said the fees had deterred nurses from applying.

The prime minister’s commission aims to encourage more nurses to manage their own services.

England’s chief nursing officer Dame Chris Beasley told Nursing Standard the government has helped nurses run their own services by lifting legal barriers. Professor Beasley said she wants the commission to look again at why so few nurses have become nurse partners running their own GP practices.

Pictured above, Said Business School in Oxford, and inset, former nurse entrepreneur course attendees Jo Pritchard and Tricia McGregor

nurses are involved in drawing up cleaning contracts and education for all healthcare workers on infection control.

2006 Modernising Nursing Careers launched by health secretary Patricia Hewitt and Professor Beasley. The document looked at how nurses could take on different roles and pursue training to develop generalist and specialist skills. It promised to address the inflexibilities in branch nursing and barriers between research, education and service.