If hospital nurses are to lose weight, the NHS needs to provide more food

The focus on food in hospitals is invariably on the patients. So it is good to read that NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens is concerned by rising obesity rates and the health of his employees (Analysis August 13).

He wants the health service to be a responsible employer by improving the food available for its staff. The irony is that if Mr Stevens really wants to help us lose weight, he will have to provide more food. We nurses need to eat. But most of the time, there isn’t much around. Try looking for a healthy, quick snack at 3am, let alone 3pm. If burgers and chips are all there is, we eat them.

As Kat Keogh reports, some of us take better care of ourselves than others – and this is reflected in our waistlines. We would all like to eat well, but who has the time to bring in their own meals and eat them cold? Breaks tend to be short. We eat as fast as we can wolf it down. Perhaps one reason why nurses tolerate hospital fare so well is we eat it so fast that we don’t even taste it.

Bridget Ryan, by email

FILL IN OUR SURVEY TO HELP FOSTER A CULTURE OF HEALTH AND FITNESS

On behalf of the University of Aberdeen, I am inviting nurses to complete an online national survey on the influence of their eating and physical activity for managing body weight.

We know first-hand the many demands on your time, but please do complete this important survey. It has now been extended until August 24.

To take part, go to viis.abdn.ac.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=140560071804

The survey looks at health behaviour and how workplaces could be changed to help with healthy eating and physical activity. The information you provide will help us develop recommendations for a workplace-based dietary and physical activity intervention for nurses. All data will be anonymous and it will not be possible to link responses to individuals.

Brian Power, MRC PhD student, Health Services Research Unit, University of Aberdeen

THE NMC IS TAKING TOO LONG TO PROCESS OVERSEAS APPLICATIONS

As acting head of nursing and midwifery education at Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust, I would like to comment on ‘Supervised placements will be scrapped for staff coming to the UK’ (News August 6).

We work hard to support nursing staff from overseas in gaining their registration. This is part of our recruitment process. Most of the staff who seek registration work as healthcare assistants and wish to continue to work in our organisation. We are keen to provide them with supervised placements.

What we do find frustrating is the length of time it is taking the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to process their applications.

Staff have been waiting for more than two months and many have been told they face a further delay of at least a further two months. The NMC is causing an unacceptable bottleneck and we would like director of registration Alison Sansome to address this.

The transition into a different culture and expectations of nursing require more than just an online multiple choice and practical assessment. Overseas nurses need time and support to learn and develop their skills to meet the expectations of nursing in the UK.

We plan to continue this support if our overseas nurses can get through the process and obtain their NMC letters of approval.

Debbie Knight, by email

HELP FOR OVERSEAS NURSES UNABLE TO OBTAIN SUPERVISED PLACEMENTS

Nurses from outside the European Economic Area looking to work in the UK will no longer have to complete