NURSING STUDENTS

Attrition higher with off-campus living

Living off campus can affect student drop-out rates, according to a nurse academic.

University of Hertfordshire pre-registration nursing lead Jane Say presented a study on attrition rates at the RCN education forum conference last week, using data from four adult nursing cohorts at the university from September 2011 to February 2013.

‘The further away they lived from the university the more likely we were to see drop outs,’ Ms Say told the conference. ‘A lot of students are not living on campus, they’re living at home and travelling in.’ She added this often made for longer working days, more tiredness and students ‘not feeling part of the university’.

The university’s attrition rate for nursing has fallen to 7-8%, down from 31% in September 2011, when the nursing programme was launched.

IN BRIEF

A London trust has launched the HALT (Hungry, Angry, Late, Tired) campaign to encourage staff to take frequent breaks and improve their health and well-being.

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Anger over agency shifts ban for NHS nurses

By Alistair Kleebauer

Nurses have reacted with anger after learning they can no longer take on agency work if they are otherwise employed by an NHS trust.

From 1 April, NHS Improvement is introducing a measure to stop most NHS trusts in England from employing someone through an agency if that person has a substantive contract with the NHS.

Many nurses aired their anger on social media last week and the RCN condemned the move, saying that it was not consulted on the decision. One reader posted on Nursing Standard’s Facebook page: ‘Maybe if nurses’ pay was better we would have more people wanting to be in the profession, reducing the need to have agency nurses and for nurses to have a second job.’

This is the latest in a series of measures introduced since October 2015 to curb health service spending on agency staff. The new rule means NHS nurses who want to work extra hours must join their trust’s staff bank or work overtime.

If they want to work extra hours at a trust that is not their main employer, they must join that trust’s staff bank, but this practice is not being encouraged by NHS Improvement.

Only a small number of foundation trusts without any financial difficulties will be exempt from the rule, but they will still be encouraged to follow it.

RCN senior employment relations adviser Gerry O’Dwyer said: ‘They are turning some staff into indentured labour. It is saying “you can only work for us. You have to be on the bank and we will tell you exactly how much money you can earn”.’

Trusts were informed of the measure by NHS Improvement on 27 February, but the RCN said many of its members only received letters from their employers explaining the change last week.

NHS Improvement claims some trusts are trying to bypass controls on agency staff by setting up staff banks and allowing workers, including permanent staff, to be paid through personal service companies and limited liability partnerships. This will no longer be permitted under the changes.

NHS Improvement chief executive Jim Mackey said: ‘These new rules will make sure most agency staff get paid and taxed in the same way as their NHS staff colleagues.’

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To read more on calls to guarantee the working rights of European Union nurses in the UK post-Brexit, go to rcni.com/Brexit-commons

28 April

The closing date for the consultation on NHS Improvement draft guidance on safe caseloads in district nursing

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