Patient's Charter update may rule on mixed-sex wards

The government was expected to launch an extended version of the Patient's Charter in London today (Wednesday).

The charter, an update on the 1992 original, was expected to include a commitment to avoid placing patients on mixed-sex wards wherever possible.

A version of the document, which was leaked last week, was reported to say no one should wait more than six months between seeing their GP and having an outpatient appointment with a specialist.

It was also reported to include minimum standards for hospital food and to set the maximum waiting time for heart bypass surgery at one year.

A spokesperson for the Royal College of Nursing said any moves to tighten up the Patient's Charter would win approval from nurses.

'Mixed-sex wards and impossibly long waits for a consultant's appointment are top of the RCN’s agenda to be tackled,’ he said.

Britain is the only country in the European Union where patients have no legal right to be cared for in a single sex ward.

And the government's waiting list statistics have been criticised since the original Charter was launched because they hide the time patients may have to wait before a first appointment with a specialist.

RCN dismisses threat to Broadmoor nurses

The RCN has dismissed press reports that nurses at Broadmoor Special Hospital in Berkshire are living in fear of a former patient.

Convicted rapist Paul Marshall escaped from Rampton hospital in Nottinghamshire shortly before Christmas. Press reports have claimed that while Mr Marshall was at Broadmoor in 1993 he had promised to 'settle old scores' with some of the nurses at the hospital.

Hospital managers have issued photographs of Mr Marshall to selected staff and advised nurses to contact the police immediately if they see or hear from him.

But Royal College of Nursing officer Jan Coe­shall, speaking after a routine visit to Broadmoor last week, said the nurses did not expect Mr Marshall to turn up at the hospital.

'The nurses at the hospital are trained to look after these people, they know how to handle them,’ Ms Coeshall said. 'If we had members who were that concerned they would have contacted us,’ she added.

The Prison Officers’ Association has refused to make any comment.

IN BRIEF

- Former Royal College of Nursing research adviser Paul Denton has taken up a new post as mental health services director with Guild Community Healthcare Trust in Preston.

- Health Promotion Wales is launching its Healthy Hospital Award for 1995. The awards are designed to reward hospitals for promoting a healthy environment for both staff and patients. The launch will be at the Wrexham Medical Institute on January 20.