Ambulance-chasing lawyers should be banned from touting for business in hospital A&E departments, says the government. Health minister Simon Burns wants all NHS trusts to stop allowing personal injury lawyers to advertise for clients on hospital premises. Complaints about the practice were raised in the House of Commons last week by Conservative MP Andrew Bridgen during health questions.

A philanthropist and descendant of the founder of district nursing was awarded an OBE for his charitable services in the Queen’s New Year Honours List. William Rathbone, a trustee of the Queen’s Nursing Institute for 38 years, is great-great grandson of William Rathbone VI, who first employed a district nurse in Liverpool in 1859 and later paid for the first training school for district nurses.

A leading nurse academic has become acting chair of the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement. Tony Butterworth, a member of Nursing Standard's editorial advisory board, took up the part-time role at the start of this month. The NHS Institute, an arm's length body sponsored by the Department of Health, is in the process of becoming an independent organisation. Professor Butterworth said it was an honour to follow in the footsteps of previous chair Dame Yve Buckland.

An obesity management website has been piloted to assist nurses in giving overweight patients intensive support and advice on weight loss. Preliminary results from the Positive Online Weight Reduction (POWeR) project show how the internet offers patients interactive advice and is more cost effective than other interventions. The next phase of the University of Southampton project will assess the effectiveness of internet-based nurse intervention.

Proposed new indicators for reviewing patients with depression in general practices have been welcomed by mental health nurses. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) last week published 20 proposed Quality and Outcome Framework indicators for 2013/14, including one on the number of patients receiving biopsychosocial assessments at the point of diagnosis. NICE had proposed removing payments to general practice for assessing people with depression from this April.

The effects of single room accommodation on patients and staff will be analysed as part of a £370,000 study into hospital accommodation. Researchers from the National Nursing Research Unit at King’s College London, funded by the National Institute for Health Research, will look at the before and after effects of the move to single rooms on issues such as cost, staff and patient experience.

Nearly 2,000 training places for nurses and midwives are to be funded by the Welsh assembly government for 2012/13. The government said training places had fallen since last year because of low staff turnover and increases in the number of NHS staff in post in Wales over the past decade. It will commission more than £82 million of training for non-medical healthcare professionals.

Care Quality Commission reports highlight failures in learning disabilities services

Learning disability services are still failing to comply in full with essential standards, a series of inspections has revealed.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a further ten reports last week from a targeted programme of 150 unannounced inspections of hospitals and care homes in England. They were ordered following a BBC Panorama documentary exposing poor care at Winterbourne View care home in Bristol.

Only four of ten organisations in the latest reports were fully compliant with standards. Bernadette Hanney, national project lead for the CQC’s learning disability review, described the non-compliance as ‘worrying’.

Nurse whistleblower Terry Bryan, who took part in the Panorama programme and is a member of the inspection teams, said he had witnessed a lot of good practice. He said staff need to make sure that service users have significant input into their own care plans.

The reports come weeks after the health department announced a national recruitment campaign for more learning disability nurses.

Call for more focus on staffing levels by regulator

The health and social care regulator should increase its focus on staffing levels, the RCN has said following a survey of members.

More than a third of the 5,000 nurses surveyed said the Care Quality Commission does not sufficiently take into account staffing levels and skill mix when assessing hospitals.

RCN general secretary Peter Carter said staffing levels were ‘pivotal’.

The college put forward ten recommendations, which include a call for annual unannounced inspections. Staff should be interviewed without managers present, and there should be a balance of day and night inspections.

The commission’s director of regulatory development Phillip King said: ‘The commission does not determine minimum staffing levels. We expect providers to make these decisions based on the specific needs of those using their services, taking into consideration guidance from professional bodies, including the RCN.’