Controversial pay consultation to begin

Sick pay will be reduced and only nurses whose performance is judged to be excellent will receive incremental pay rises under controversial proposals expected to go out to consultation this week, Nursing Standard has learned.

Under the proposed overhaul of Agenda for Change in England, nurses’ pay would be linked to performance. A band 6 nurse on £32,573 a year who was judged to be performing at less than optimum levels would miss out on an increment worth £1,616.

The proposals also include scrapping the enhanced payments linked to unsocial hours that are currently included in sick pay.

Under the proposals, sick pay rates would be based on basic pay, rather than the enhanced rate for working unsocial hours.

Health unions have been discussing the proposals with NHS Employers, which represents the Department of Health in pay negotiations, since last summer, according to RCN head of employment relations Josie Irwin.

The consultation is expected to end next month and union members will be emailed documents from this week.

Earlier this month, Nursing Standard revealed 16 NHS trusts in the south west have joined a ‘regional pay club’ that aims to link increments to performance.

NMC’s plan to increase fees by £44 a year is ‘excessive’, say health unions

A consultation on controversial plans to increase nurses’ registration fees to £120 a year has received more than 4,400 responses in its first week.

Around 1,000 more responses have already been submitted than the total number received in 2006, when the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) consulted on increasing fees to their current level of £76.

The proposed hike in NMC registration fees has been described as ‘excessive and unacceptable’ by the RCN, the Royal College of Midwives, Unison and Unite, which issued a joint statement last week condemning the move. The statement coincided with the start of a three-month consultation on increasing fees from January 2013 and linking future rises to inflation.

“We believe it is inappropriate to seek such an increase in fees when nurses and midwives are already seeing multiple assaults on their pay packets,” says the unions’ statement.

Unions believe governments should help finance the NMC. The regulator argues that the £44 increase is required due to a 48 per cent rise in fitness to practise referrals since 2009/10.

An independent research company will be commissioned to analyse responses to the consultation, which points out that NMC fees are among the lowest of the nine healthcare regulators in the UK.

NMC interim chair Judith Ellis said: ‘If our income were to remain at the current level we would have no choice but to scale back our fitness to practise activity. This would mean, however, that we would be failing in our duty to protect the public.’

More than 2,000 people have signed Nursing Standard’s online petition against the fee hike, while more than 36,000 have signed an e-petition set up by mental health nurse Stephen Iwasyk on the Downing Street website.

To take part in the NMC consultation, which closes on August 24, go to http://tiny.cc/NMC_consult
You can sign our petition by visiting www.nursing-standard.co.uk

Stephen Iwasyk’s e-petition can be found at http://petitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/34101

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