Lansley confident of hitting health visitor target figure

The government has received 33,000 responses from nurses interested in pursuing a career in health visiting following a £300,000 publicity campaign.

The Department of Health (DH) sent out about 400,000 information packs to nurses in England between March and April this year.

Health secretary Andrew Lansley’s annual report for 2011/12, published last week, stated that the government is on target to recruit an extra 4,200 health visitors by April 2015.

In 2011/12, three times as many health visitors began training compared to 2010/11, it said.

Meanwhile, the DH is consulting on whether to set a goal to increase the number of healthcare staff who would recommend their workplace to friends and family needing care.

This is one of 22 objectives outlined by the health secretary in a report to the NHS Commissioning Board last week.

The consultation closes on September 26.

Go to tinyurl.com/hqnn8x

IN BRIEF

A child-friendly website has been developed by University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust to help young patients prepare for a hospital visit. The website explains what they can expect if they are about to have an operation or tests.

It also includes an activity called ‘uniform bingo’ to help children identify different types of healthcare staff. Go to www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/kids

A decision to have fewer but larger surgical centres for children with complex heart conditions has been welcomed by the RCN.

The government announced last week that three of England’s ten children’s cardiac units will close to focus specialist surgical expertise in seven congenital heart networks. RCN general secretary Peter Carter said the outcome will ensure children with complex heart conditions receive ‘the best quality of care’. The changes will be implemented in 2014.

The RCN has been awarded a prestigious Investors in People Gold Award. Less than 3 per cent of organisations receive the accolade, which is given to those who can demonstrate excellence in supporting staff. The RCN was commended for its work on health and wellbeing.

RCN director of human resources David Cooper welcomed the news. The college met more than 165 criteria to reach the standard.

Two former NHS employees have been arrested as part of a police investigation into inappropriate payments made by journalists for information. It is believed that one of those arrested is a psychiatric nurse, but Scotland Yard refused to confirm this. Police are looking into payments to public officials following the News International phone hacking scandal.

The Royal College of Midwives has warned that the quality of training for midwives could be compromised because there are too few teachers. Data gathered by the college from 34 higher education institutions reveals that the student-to-teacher ratio is 14:1 for 2011/12, up from 13.1 in 2009/10. In 2003, the college recommended the ratio should be ten students to every teacher.

Increasing numbers of nurses are applying for a course set up to teach healthcare professionals about benefits available to cancer patients. The cancer support welfare and benefits course is a collaboration between Macmillan Cancer Support, the Scottish Government and the University of Stirling. The university’s Macmillan lecturer Nicola Cunningham said: ‘Our aim is to increase the mix of health, social care and welfare professionals working together and sharing knowledge.’ For more information go to tinyurl.com/bh8qmmj

The government should give ‘serious consideration’ to reducing the range of free NHS services, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has urged. The institute last week published an analysis of future spending scenarios for the NHS in England. A Unison spokesperson said: ‘Making patients pay for treatment would be an attack on the founding principles of our NHS.’