PRIORITISE OLDER PEOPLE COMPETENCIES, HOSPITALS TOLD

Ten organisations are calling on hospitals to demonstrate that they are prioritising the competence and training of staff working with older people.

Age UK, Macmillan Cancer Support, the Royal College of Physicians and the RCN are among the bodies that want hospitals to prove that all staff who have contact with older patients receive core training in caring for older people, including communication skills.

In a statement, the organisations outlined three priority areas for commissioners and hospitals that centre on training and competence of staff, culture and structure within hospitals and person-centred care.

The statement said that they want the values, behaviours, skills and performance of hospital staff in caring for older people to be assessed as part of robust recruitment and appraisal.

This comes one week after a review of the feasibility of introducing a ratings system for hospitals and care homes was set up by health secretary Jeremy Hunt.

He has asked Jennifer Dixon, former board member of the now defunct regulator the Healthcare Commission to look into how an ‘Ofsted-style’ system could be introduced for health providers.

Mr Hunt said that information published on schools by Ofsted shows the public how schools are performing and this should be possible in health and social care too.

RCN tries to shore up national pay while staff face sack over new shifts

By Tamsin Snow and Sally Gillen

RCN members will be asked whether they would be prepared to take industrial action over a proposed overhaul of Agenda for Change.

The proposals for England include linking incremental pay rises to performance, removing unsocial hours enhancements from sick pay and reducing from two to one the number of pay rises newly qualified nurses receive in their first year of work.

Unions hope the proposals will encourage NHS trusts to stick to Agenda for Change (AfC).

The college is organising branch meetings for members, who will be asked to consider five questions, including whether the RCN should accept the changes or reject them.

The RCN suggests that rejecting the proposals could result in trusts, or groups of employers, making their own changes to terms and conditions.

The questionnaire asks members to agree or disagree on a scale of one to five with statements including ‘supporting these national changes is better than risking individual or groups of employers making their own’.

Nineteen trusts in the south west have formed a consortium and are considering breaking away from nationally agreed terms and conditions. A protest against what is seen by many as an employers’ cartel was held in Bristol on Saturday.

‘Consultation’

Meanwhile, nurses at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust have been told that they face losing their jobs unless they agree to reduced terms and conditions. The trust is consulting on reducing sick pay and removing enhancements for unsocial hours.

Bolton NHS Foundation Trust is considering dismissing its entire nursing workforce unless it agrees to new terms. The trust has given notice that it will consult its 1,450 nursing staff on replacing daily shift patterns of two 7.5 hour shifts and one 10 hour 45 minute shift with two shifts lasting 12.5 hours.

A spokesperson confirmed that unless the move is agreed, the trust will consider dismissing staff and re-employing them on the revised shifts.

RCN employment relations adviser Gerry O’Dwyer said: ‘It is difficult to see how any negotiations can be conducted in good faith where there is a threat of dismissal from the outset.’

Unison is organising meetings for members on AfC changes. Unite began a postal survey of its members last week.