Shape of Caring review aims to improve training

By Kat Keogh

The quality of nurse training in England will be in the spotlight when a major review of pre and post-registration education is launched next month.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council and nurse education and training provider Health Education England (HEE) have teamed up to see how nurse and healthcare assistant training can be improved to boost patient care.

The Shape of Caring review comes after concerns about the standard of nurse training were raised in Robert Francis QC’s report on Mid Staffs.

A key focus will be the controversial pilot programme where prospective nursing students work as healthcare assistants (HCAs) for a year before embarking on a nursing degree.

An HEE spokesperson said the structure of the review will be discussed at a meeting next month, and recommendations are expected to be made in a final report in early 2015.

‘To ensure that our nurses and HCAs receive high quality education and training, which supports high quality patient care, our organisations have partnered to formally establish the Shape of Caring review,’ the spokesperson added.

‘This should produce healthcare professionals of high calibre, who are able to meet the changing needs of patients and the broader population.’

The review will be headed up by Lord Willis of Knaresborough, who led an RCN-commissioned review into nurse education in 2012.

The Liberal Democrat peer has criticised the HCA pilot scheme, which was launched last autumn.

The 2012 Willis commission made 29 recommendations, including mandatory regulation of HCAs, more placements in the community and dedicated time for mentorship.

Click here to read the findings of Lord Willis’ previous education review

Be firm and ask for more says nurse practitioner

Nurses attached to GP surgeries should not be afraid to demand more money if they are asked to work weekends, a leading nurse practitioner has said.

Jenny Aston’s comments follow prime minister David Cameron’s announcement last week that more than 7.5 million people in England will be offered more access to their GP surgeries at evenings and weekends, with £50 million funding for 1,147 practices to offer extra services at times convenient for patients.

But Ms Aston, a nurse practitioner in Cambridge and chair of the nursing group of the Royal College of GPs’ General Practice Foundation, said: ‘Advanced practice nurses will probably be expected to do their bit one evening a month. I do not think they would get any more money for that. But if nurses are asked to do weekends, they can be firmer about pay than before because there is a shortage of practice nurses and they have a bit more power than in the past.’

RCN head of policy Howard Catton said that Mr Cameron’s plans for extending access were ‘light on nursing’. He added: ‘They make it feel that doctors are the answer to everything, but really it is about the whole multidisciplinary team, including nurses, not just GPs’