Changes at regulator may speed up its FtP decisions

By Stephanie Jones-Berry @NurseNewsSteph

A proposed overhaul of UK healthcare regulation may result in nurses’ fitness to practise (FtP) cases being resolved more quickly.

The changes are designed to allow professional watchdogs to speed up and streamline their process.

The day-to-day functions of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), and those of other regulators, are subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Under the proposed changes, the regulators would be able to set more of their own procedures, such as the number of people who sit on FtP panels, without needing to seek parliament’s approval.

‘More efficient system’

RCN interim director of nursing policy and practice Bronagh Scott welcomed the plans.

‘Making quicker decisions in fitness to practise cases will benefit patients, as well as nursing staff who find themselves at the centre of an investigation,’ she said.

PREREGISTRATION EDUCATION

Rise in degree applications ‘too small’

Huge increases in nursing student applications from England are needed, says the RCN, as figures show only a 4% increase since last year.

There were 36,810 applications from people in England for UK nursing degrees starting in 2019, compared with 35,260 applications for 2018 entry.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service figures show a 29% fall in applications since 2016, when 51,840 students in England applied for UK nursing degrees. The nursing student bursary was scrapped for students in England in 2017.

RCN general secretary Dame Donna Kinnair said: ‘We need to see a much bigger increase if we are to have the number of nurses to sustain health and care services.

‘With experienced nurses leaving, we are papering over the cracks, at best.’

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said the department was taking ‘immediate steps’ to secure the staff needed.

‘Managers should know which members of staff go home to an empty house, those that don’t have support at home’

Jennifer Hawkins
clinical lead, the Laura Hyde Foundation charity
See page 8

‘Unless leaders provide the resources the workforce needs, patients face a long wait for the improvements the NHS funding boost promised’

Siva Anandaciva
chief analyst at the King’s Fund
See page 65

Abuse claims: nurses suspended

Three nurses from Whorlton Hall hospital in County Durham have been suspended by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

Karen Mcghee, Stephen John Robdrup and John Christopher Shield were each issued with provisional 18-month bans by the nurse regulator.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) began a review earlier this month in response to allegations of abuse of vulnerable patients at Whorlton Hall.

The CQC ordered the investigation after a BBC Panorama programme appeared to show staff mocking, taunting, intimidating and repeatedly restraining patients at the private hospital.

NMC director of fitness to practise Matthew McClelland said an independent panel made the interim suspension orders.

Each nurse’s interim suspension order will be reviewed in the next six months. NMC papers state the regulator’s case examiners are yet to decide whether the nurses have cases to answer in relation to the abuse allegations.

Durham police arrested ten members of Whorlton Hall’s staff in May. All have since been released while investigations continue, and a further two people have been interviewed.

The hospital has since closed and patients have been transferred elsewhere.

rcni.com/whorlton-hall-NMC