Compassion should be the NMC’s byword

Why ensuring registrants feel supported is an issue close to my heart

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reating people with kindness, respect and compassion sounds simple, yet it is something many organisations struggle to do. Too often we focus on process and forget about the people involved.

While the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has made a lot of progress, we still haven’t got this completely right. Only recently, we were alerted to an email we sent to someone who had left our register after 45 years, in which we failed to thank them for their service.

Clearly, 45 years of dedicated public service deserved more. We acted quickly to change our emails and say sorry, but it shows the impact that a few words – or lack of them – can have.

Details matter and, in leading the NMC, I want to make every single interaction count.

Seeking your help to focus on what matters

We are consulting on our strategic themes in preparation for our new NMC strategy for 2020-25. It is essential we get out and about to talk to professionals on our register, the public and our partners so we can focus on what matters. It’s one of the favourite parts of my job.

I enjoyed the round table discussion we held in Bristol in August, at which nurses and midwives working in diverse settings shared their views about our approach and future priorities. They challenged us to be more proactive, supportive and less distant and to be better at sharing lessons learned from our work.

It was a brilliant day. There will be many more opportunities for people to get involved and I hope you will.

Our fitness to practise (FtP) work is often a focus in these discussions, with nurses and midwives highlighting the fear they feel at the prospect of losing their registration.

We are mindful of this and while only a tiny number of people are involved in such cases, we are acutely aware of the impact on people affected by poor care and registrants under scrutiny.

We are determined to minimise distress

A stark reminder of this came in this year’s annual FtP report when, for the first time, we included the number of people who have died by suicide while going through our FtP processes – four since April 2018.

We are determined to minimise the distress being involved in our FtP work can cause. We’ve introduced a new public support service for people affected by poor care, together with an emotional support line. We’ll also be introducing an independent emotional support line for professionals involved in FtP cases.

‘When I say this is important to me, I want people to understand why and know I mean to take action. Leaders should never fall into the trap of thinking they have to appear invincible’

Ensuring people have support they need in difficult times is a cause close to my heart, as I lost my brother Adrian to suicide more than ten years ago. I recently wrote about this in a blog on the anniversary of Adrian’s death. That may seem to be a strange thing for a leader to do, but when I say this is important to me, I want people to understand why and know I mean to take action.

Nurses and midwives deserve our respect

And leaders should never fall into the trap of thinking they have to appear invincible. Yes, we should inspire hope, but sharing our vulnerability makes us human and more approachable, which I firmly believe leads to better relationships and that’s what leadership and management is all about.

Our commitment is to treat all those affected by what we do with kindness, respect and compassion, to be open when we don’t get it right and to work hard to change and improve, so we can support nurses, midwives and nursing associates to deliver the best, safest care possible.

You can help to shape the NMC’s new five-year strategy by sharing your views in our consultation.

NMC Shaping the Future consultation
nmc.org.uk/shaping-the-future

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