REGULATOR STATISTICS

NMC reveals suicide data for fitness to practise cases

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Four registrants have died by suicide while under investigation by the nursing regulator since April 2018, according to the organisation’s annual Fitness to Practise (FtP) report.

This is the first time the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has recorded the data on suicides, and follows plans to introduce emotional support packages for registrants undergoing the FtP process, revealed earlier this year.

Fewer nurses and midwives were referred to the NMC in 2018-19, but those who were referred were more likely to be struck off.

In total there was a 2.5% drop in referrals to the NMC in this period – 5,373 compared with 5,509 in the previous year. However, 155 nurses were struck off by the NMC in 2018-19, despite making up 12.4% of new referrals to the NMC in 2018-19, despite forming only 6.7% of the nursing register. Nurses of white British ethnicity – 70% of the nursing register – were less likely to face FtP concerns about them, accounting for 61% of referrals.

Analysis of case examiner decisions showed the ethnic groups with proportionately more ‘facts not proved and no further action taken’ in their cases were Asian Indian (65.8%) and black African (63%).

NHS race equality expert Roger Kline said the NMC should ensure employers carry out impartial checks so that referrals are appropriate.

When a case is dropped, a review of the processes that led to it being opened should take place, he said.

‘It is unacceptable that such a disproportionate number of black African nurses are referred to the regulator,’ he said.

NMC director of fitness to practise Matthew McClelland said the regulator will conduct further research into why disproportionate numbers of ethnic minority staff are referred to the regulator.

Both reports were published as the NMC launched its consultation asking for registrants’ views on its proposed five-year strategy. Chief executive Andrea Sutcliffe said a key theme was strengthening the relationship between the regulator and the profession to one of ‘mutual respect’. ‘I’m not sure that having 698,000 people afraid of us is the best way to run a regulator,’ she said.

REGISTRATION

Regulator’s standard letter will now say ‘thank you’ to nurses

The nursing regulator will change the wording of a registration letter following complaints it strikes an ungrateful tone.

England’s chief nursing officer Ruth May flagged the issue with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) after a nurse expressed disdain on social media at not being thanked for 45 years’ service to the NHS in a letter about lapsed registration.

‘My PIN has just expired and I got a curt letter from the NMC stating that I MUST NOT call myself a registered nurse. Not one word of thanks... I didn’t expect a medal... but a sentence containing the word “thanks” would have been appreciated,’ the social media post read.

NMC chief executive Andrea Sutcliffe said nurses are thanked for their service when the regulator is informed they are leaving the register. But she acknowledged this is not the case in the letter for lapsed registrants, and said that the wording would be changed.

‘Lapsed registration may be unintentional, so it is important we make registrants aware of what this means,’ she said. ‘However, it may have been planned, and we should reflect that in our communications.’