

nursing matters

UNISON newsletter for nurses, midwives and health visitors

April 2008

Reshaping nursing from the grassroots

In February 2008 UNISON responded to two major consultations on the future of nursing that represented some of the most significant changes to the profession since training moved to higher education in 1989.

After the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) launched a UK-wide 'Review of Pre-Registration Nursing Education' and the Department of Health launched 'Towards a Framework for Post Registration Nursing Careers' in England, UNISON set about gathering the views of members and patients' organisations.

This enabled UNISON to submit detailed responses to both consultations that spelled out the views of our members, as follows:

Pre-registration nursing education

- UNISON opposes any move towards an all-graduate profession and wishes to see a diversity of routes into the profession maintained.
- The more fundamental issue lies in the competencies needed to nurse and ensuring that adequate support is available within higher education institutes (HEIs).
- UNISON members want greater investment in clinical tutors and nurse educators, with a requirement that they work directly with the students in all their clinical placements during each of their modules.
- UNISON wishes to see a return to salary status for all students and a requirement that they are accountable



to both the HEIs and their employer.

- All students, irrespective of which health course they are taking, should have the ability to step on and off their career pathway as their circumstances change.
- UNISON members feel strongly that the branch programme should be retained. However, there

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are concerns about the benefit of the common foundation year and the point at which students make their decisions regarding the branch programme.

- UNISON members support the need for consolidation, but argue that it should not be linked to temporary registration and that nurses must be fit at the point of registration. Consolidation should not be used to assess fitness to practice.

Framework for Post Registration Nursing Careers

- UNISON members are firmly of the view that there needs to be a career framework for nurses, however it must be developed in partnership and have a level of independence, as used to be the case with the English National Board.
- The framework can only succeed with sufficient funding and support for mentoring and clinical supervision. Capacity

is needed to release registrants from the service to undertake training and arrangements must be put in place to allow for backfilling of posts without a negative impact on the service.

- Any framework has to tie into the outcomes of the Darzi review.
- There is a clear need for strong and effective workforce planning, however we would argue that this can only be achieved with improvements in the monitoring of student attrition.
- The Department of Health's general proposals can only be taken forward successfully by engaging registrants and service users in the next stage of developing the detail of nursing career options.

UNISON awaits the outcome of these consultations with interest and will be pursuing every avenue available to push this agenda in helping shape the nursing profession of the future. The detailed responses

can be viewed at www.unison.org.uk/healthcare/nursing/pastconsultations

An alternative vision for Darzi

While UNISON was putting its members' case in the reshaping of nursing education and careers, the entire direction of the NHS has also been under examination in the NHS Next Stage Review conducted by Lord Ara Darzi.

Following publication of an interim review report in October 2007, UNISON put forward its response to Lord Darzi by welcoming the review as an attempt to re-engage health staff with future developments in the NHS, but encouraging Lord Darzi to consult as widely as possible to ensure that staff from all health professions are included in his deliberations.

Setting out recommendations under the headings of quality improvement, workforce, leadership, primary and community care strategy, systems and incentives, UNISON highlighted practical solutions to problems around issues such as Agenda for Change and

Get connected to our e-bulletins

UNISON has launched its 'Get Connected' campaign to establish e-mail networks for UNISON members who work as nurses, midwives, health visitors, healthcare assistants or student nurses.

Members who are part of the network will receive regular e-mail bulletins on key workplace issues for members of the nursing team and be able to feed back views direct to UNISON's Health Group

If you would like copies of the **Get Connected postcard** to distribute among members or sign up, please contact your branch secretary, who can order the postcards through the UNISON online catalogue using stock number 2649.



the implementation of the Knowledge and Skills Framework, as well as more ambitious recommendations for alternatives to the use of the market.

The response addressed the issue of an NHS constitution, arguing that it could be a useful device for restating the founding principles of the NHS in a modern format, but, to be a truly worthwhile exercise, it needs to provide robust guarantees to staff and be legally binding on all providers of healthcare.

Code of conduct raises serious questions

The Nursing and Midwifery Council put forward proposals for a revised code of conduct last year that provoked a robust response from UNISON.

After receiving an advance copy of the revised code following the conclusion of the consultation, UNISON has written formally to the NMC to express our concern that such an important code is properly defined to act as an effective tool for judging cases of misconduct while protecting both patient safety and registrants

Copies of the code of conduct can be obtained from the NMC stand in the conference exhibition area (Central 2 of Manchester Central Convention Complex).

Calling all healthcare assistants

Building on the hugely successful Healthcare Assistant Conferences of 2003 and 2005, which attracted in excess of 400 delegates, UNISON is planning a fresh



conference for July of this year to tackle the key issues facing healthcare assistants. For information, go to the UNISON nursing web page at www.unison.org.uk/healthcare/nursing Seminars are also in the pipeline for general and mental health nursing over the course of 2008.

Nurses: Promiscuous, Grubby and Drunken – Fact or Fiction?

Come along to the National Nursing Sector fringe meeting in Manchester Central's Exchange Hall at 5.15pm on Tuesday 15 April, when we will be hosting a panel debate on the recent media coverage following Lord Mancroft's speech in the House of Lords. We'll be addressing whether his case was a genuine isolated example of poor practise or another crass stereotyping of the profession in line with Carry on Films and the Channel 4 drama 'No Angels'? The panel will be made up of nurses, journalists and patients, providing a unique opportunity for an open

and frank discussion about the image of the profession.

New mental health coalition makes its mark

UNISON was instrumental in working as part of the newly formed Mental Health Coalition to develop responses to the draft revised Mental Health Act 1983 code of Practice and Mental Capacity Act 2005 deprivation of liberty safeguards. Although broadly satisfied with the content of both documents as helpful to mental health staff in carrying out their work, the coalition pinpointed a number of specific concerns important to defending the interests of both staff and patients.

Defending our senior care workers from overseas

When the Border and Immigration Agency announced a sweeping policy decision not to issue any new work permits or renew existing work permits for senior care workers, UNISON mounted a long and concerted campaign that resulted in a number of

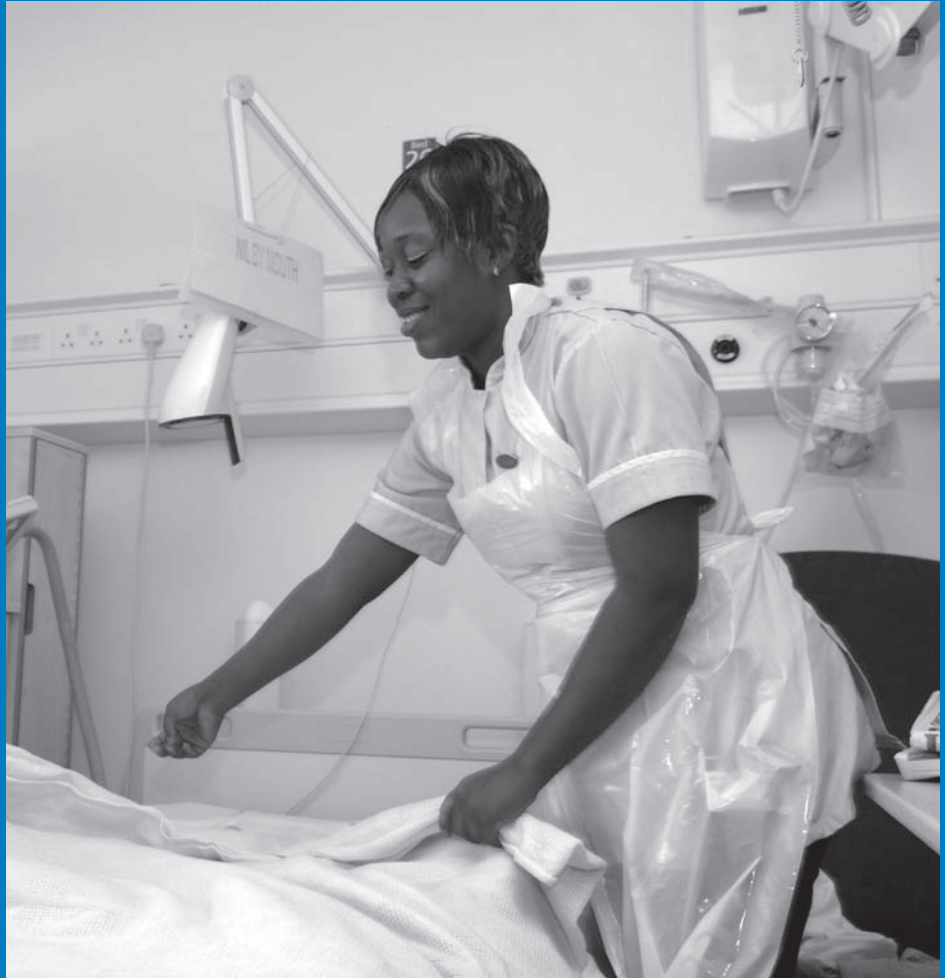
concessions in the assessment of work permit extensions for senior care workers already in the UK.

Although the changes have still caused a great deal of distress to senior care workers from overseas, the concessions now mean that existing senior care workers who are already in the UK can make change of employment applications without having to meet the new tougher skills criteria that were announced last summer provided the new employer pays an hourly rate of at least £7.02. Senior care workers who have work permits which were approved prior to 31 December 2003 can now receive an extension for a maximum of 12 months.

Bullying claims at NMC investigated

Following allegations that former Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) members and staff have suffered bullying and racism at the regulatory body, UNISON welcomed the announcement of an investigation by the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence and offered any assistance required in the process.

In honour of Mary Seacole



Applications are invited for this year's Mary Seacole awards, which are made annually in honour of this inspiring nurse's pioneering work and achievements. With Development Awards available at £6,250 each and Leadership Awards at £12,500 each, you can read more about eligibility and obtain an application form through the UNISON web site at www.unison.org.uk/healthcare/nursing. The deadline for receipt of applications by the administrators is 7 May.