Staffing for Safe and Effective

What's the issue?

breadth of publicly funded health and social care services.

In their recent proposals for the update to the Health and Social Care Act, NHS England and Improvement recommend that government "review whether national responsibilities and duties in relation to workforce functions are sufficiently clear"[5].

We welcome this recognition from the health and care system that a review of duties is required. The aim of this review should enable all the players with a role in workforce supply and planning to understand their own responsibilities, and what they can expect from others.

What is the impact?

There is an increasing body of academic evidence which shows a link between insufficient numbers of nurses on a shift, and increases in length of stay, patient mortality, errors and missed care[6].

Patients face longer waits for treatment and a lack of continuity of care when there are a high number of vacant nursing posts. This could mean that individuals are more unwell by the time they receive support, and opportunities to avoid complications may have been missed.

Vacant posts put additional pressure on nursing staff, meaning they work longer hours and miss breaks.

Our 2017 survey revealed that, on average, the respondents with less than half of their planned registered nurses worked 23 minutes more additional time on that shift than their colleagues who had all the registered nurses they planned for[7].

Regularly working overtime can contribute to nursing staff experiencing fatigue, which could lead to an increased chance of errors. It also means a reduction in the breaks that staff are getting between sgist

What is the RCN calling for?

Government and the system must publish a fully costed and funded national workforce strategy, which understands and responds to the challenges the health and care system is facing, including the experiences of the workforce. It needs to set out credible long term p.5 (u).2 (o)1fcr303o

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