

Action Cerebral Palsy

Political & Parliamentary Monitoring – Week commencing 14th May 2018

The BBC has [reported](#) on the Professional Standards Authority publishing its review into the Nursing and Midwifery Council's handling of allegations of malpractice by nurses on its register in what has been dubbed the Morecambe Bay maternity scandal. The report ruled that avoidable deaths occurred at the hospital while regulators took too long to act on concerns. 11 babies and one mother died in the nine years between 2004 and 2013. The NMC apologised and its Chief Executive, Jackie Smith, [resigned](#) ahead of the report's publication. Having been in the position for six years, she will step down in July.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) had its annual congress this week in which it published a number of reports, including pertinent ones detailed below. The BBC [reported](#) on a poll of 1,600 adults in which 74 per cent of respondents are concerned about nurse staffing.

Overview

- [Nurses call for investment in specialist children's nurses](#)
- [Councils reallocate school funding for SEND provisions](#)
- [Nurses denied training because of "staffing and funding pressures"](#)

Nurses call for investment in specialist children's nurses

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has [published](#) a report entitled *The Best Start: The Future of Children's Health – One Year On. Valuing School Nurses and Health Visitors in England*, in which it called for more investment in specialist children's nurses. Its findings show that there is a continued downward trend in health outcomes compared with other countries, further disinvestment in universal services and fragmentation in provision for children and young people.

The RCN highlights reduction in health visitors and school nurses is a particular problem and especially considering the Government's drive to reduce pressures on acute health care services in favour of primary and community health care services. The report reveals that the health visiting workforce is experiencing significant reductions, with NHS posts falling from 10,309 in October 2015 to 8,275 by January 2018. 81 per cent of health visitors and 70 per cent of school nurses had reported working additional time in their last shift alone.

The RCN concludes that the Government must ensure there is sufficient data collected for necessary monitoring and analysis, that specific support is provided for early and school aged years, and inequalities are addressed “in order to improve child health and thereby, in the longer term, adult population health outcomes.”

Janet Davies, RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary, said: “Children’s health services are the frontline defence against childhood obesity and poor child mental health. This downward trend cannot continue. The Government risks turning back the clock on children’s health if it does not invest in the school nursing and health visitor workforce.”

Councils reallocate school funding for SEND provisions

The Independent has [reported](#) that councils across England are being compelled to reallocate funding for state schooling to pay for dedicated special educational needs provisions in order to compensate for yearly overspend elsewhere. Some Leaders of county councils have penned a letter to the Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, on the matter, following the County Councils Network publishing results of a survey which shows eight authorities have transferred £43 million of money allocated to schools to SEND provisions over the past four years. 21 county councils have overspent on their allocation of the £130 million high needs block government grant.

Angela Rayner MP, Labour’s Shadow Education Secretary, said that “Schools should not have to choose between funding extra support for children with special educational needs and providing the basics that every child deserves in the classroom, but that has been a result of this government’s cuts. The Education Secretary and the Chancellor promised every school a cash boost to their budget, but now they have abandoned their own guarantee. Schools have been left scrambling to fill the gaps in their budgets, with more cuts the inevitable consequence of their failure to give them the resources they need.”

A Department for Education (DfE) spokesperson said: “Thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers 1.9 million more pupils are in good or outstanding schools than in 2010. By 2020, core school funding will rise to a record £43.5 billion – its highest ever level and 50 per cent more per pupil in real terms than in 2000 – and the introduction of the National Funding Formula will address historic disparities in the system. The high needs budget for pupils with special educational needs is £6 billion this year – the highest on record. Thanks to the additional £1.3 billion funding announced last year, every local authority will see an increase in their high needs funding over the next two years.”

Via Action Cerebral Palsy's Freedom of Information Requests, we will gain useful insight into areas where services have not been as well funded, such as speech and language therapy. We will then make contact with authorities who are falling short on the services they should be providing.

Nurses denied training because of “staffing and funding pressures”

The Royal College of Nurses (RCN) has [published](#) a report saying that nursing staff are missing out on training amid NHS cuts and attributes it to a combination of winter pressures, staff shortages and funding cuts. Workforce development funding in England has reduced by 60 per cent in two years by Health Education England, and stood at £83.49 million in 2017.

The Nursing Times has [reported](#) on an unpublished RCN survey which suggests that 14 per cent of nurses in England, along with 35 per cent in Wales, 27 per cent in Scotland and 24 per cent in Northern Ireland have been unable to complete mandatory training, ranging from hand hygiene to blood transfusion processes.

The report warned that this could result in staff falling behind with the latest clinical developments thereby putting patient safety at risk and potentially disqualifying nurses from the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) register. The NMC's revalidation requirements currently require nurses to complete 35 hours of continued professional development training every three years, on top of which the NMC is introducing new education standards for pre-registration students from January 2019.

The College is subsequently calling for additional ringfenced funding for nurse CPD, for all bodies working in healthcare education and development to publish data on total funding allocations for CPD and training, and for employers to be compelled to set aside time for it.

RCN Chief Executive and General Secretary, Janet Davies, said: “Nurses make up half the NHS workforce and, as a society, we cannot afford for their training to be an optional extra. These short-sighted cuts must be reversed. For the sake of patient safety, nurses must be allowed to keep up-to-date with developments and advance into tomorrow's nurse leadership positions. Policymakers and employers must find a way to fund and guarantee this time. Nurses must not be allowed to fall foul of the regulator's requirement,”

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said: “The NHS would collapse without our wonderful nurses – the fact that the NHS is ranked as the safest healthcare system in the world is a testament to their skill and dedication. It's essential that individual NHS employers – who remain

responsible for funding this specific type of training – support staff to develop and grow their skills, so that they can meet the requirements of their role.”

Workforce continues to be a key issue in this sector and Action Cerebral Palsy will raise this issue with Ministers.