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Top nurses to oversee pilots on pre-degree care experience

England's top nurses will oversee a pilot scheme for student nurses to spend time working as a healthcare assistant before taking up their degree.

They are part of a national steering group announced today by Health Education England. The group will be chaired by Sir Stephen Moss, a non-executive director at Derby Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and former turnaround chair at the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust.

The group includes nursing leaders from the Royal College of Nursing, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Care Quality Commission, NHS England, the Department of Health, Public Health England, NHS Employers and the NHS Trust Development Authority.

Robert Francis, in his inquiry report into the failings at Mid Staffs, recommended that student nurses should spend at least three months working on the direct care of patients before their degree course. He called for an increased focus in nurse training and education on the practical requirements of delivering compassionate care and evidence of the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours.

The Government response to the Francis report proposed that student nurses should spend up to a year working on the front line in order to receive NHS funding for their degree. The steering group announced today will oversee a pilot programme, working with partners across the NHS and higher education, to see how best to take forward these proposals and assess the most appropriate timescale.

Pilots are likely to involve up to 200 nursing students on paid placements across the country from this autumn and the steering group will also be responsible for evaluation in areas including the ability to test for values and behaviours and reductions in attrition rates.

Professor Ian Cumming OBE, Chief Executive of Health Education England, said: 'By asking prospective students to undertake up to a year of experience on the front line, we can start to ensure that the NHS recruits not just for skills and academic ability but also for values and behaviours that can be tested in a healthcare environment before the NHS spends thousands of pounds on their education.'

Professor Cumming said: 'The healthcare experience will allow students to understand whether nursing and hands-on care is right for them. It will mean better, more experienced and more committed students in our universities. That is good for patients and good for the NHS.'

He said: 'It should also help to reduce the drop-out rates at university. It should be hard to be a nurse – a vocation, a real desire, not just something you accept as second best so you can do a degree course.'

Sir Stephen Moss, Chair of the steering group, said: 'I am delighted to have been asked to chair the steering group for this important piece of work and look forward very much to working with a very experienced and committed group of colleagues on the implementation and evaluation of the pilots.'

Sir Stephen said: 'I am proud to be a nurse and want to do everything I can to ensure that we take this opportunity to address the many challenges currently facing our profession.'

He said: 'It is vitally important that we deliver skilled patient care, with kindness and compassion, and piloting this pre-degree experience will enable us to test out the effectiveness of exposing potential students to front line care and professional values at an early stage, before their formal degree programme. Of one thing I am certain, that is that things cannot stay as they are. We owe it to those we serve to continually seek new and innovative ways to meet their needs.'

Ends

For further information contact Richard Green, Head of Media Relations, 07557 204428

Notes for editors: HEE was established on 28 June 2012, working as a shadow Special Health Authority from 1 October 2012. It took on its full operational responsibilities from 1 April 2013. It has five national functions:

- providing national leadership on planning and developing the healthcare and public health workforce;
- promoting high quality education and training that is responsive to the changing needs of patients and local communities, including responsibility for ensuring the effective delivery of important national functions such as medical trainee recruitment;
- ensuring security of supply of the health and public health workforce;
- appointing and supporting the development of LETBs; and
- allocating and accounting for NHS education and training resources and the outcomes achieved.

A full list of the steering group membership is attached below, along with a biography for Sir Stephen Moss.

For more information on HEE visit our website - www.hee.nhs.uk or follow us on Twitter- @nhs_healthedeng or Facebook- www.facebook.com/nhshee

Health Education England supports the missions and values of the NHS Constitution

Steering Group

Sir Stephen Moss (Chair)	Non-executive director, Derby Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust,
Lisa Bayliss-Pratt (Vice-chair and project director)	Director of Nursing, Health Education England
Jo Lenaghan	Director of Strategy, Health Education England
Jane Cummings	Chief Nursing Officer, NHS England
Viv Bennett	Director of Nursing, Department of Health and Public Health England
Peter Blythin	Director of Nursing, NHS Trust Development Authority
Peter Carter	Chief Executive and General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing
Gail Adams	Head of Nursing, UNISON
Ieuan Ellis	Chair, Council of Deans of Health
Dame Christine Beasley	Chair, North Central and East London, Local Education and Training Boards
Dean Royles	Chief Executive, NHS Employers
Mark Newbold	Chief Executive, Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust, CEO Provider
Sally Brearley	Chair, Nursing and Care Quality Forum
Jackie Smith / Judith Ellis	Nursing and Midwifery Council
Ann Farenden	Care Quality Commission
Alan Robson	Deputy Director of Workforce Development Strategy, Department of Health

Biography – Sir Stephen Moss

Stephen is a nurse by background, and has spent his entire career in the NHS.

After a number of years in clinical practice, he moved into a variety of nursing and general management roles and has over 30 years experience in posts at board level, including chief nurse, chief executive, non executive director and chairman.

Stephen was appointed by the Secretary of State as a Commissioner on the board of the first health service quality regulator, the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI).

In February 2009, Stephen was asked to join the board of Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust as a non executive director, shortly before the publication of the highly critical Healthcare Commission Report. He took on the role of chairman in August 2009 until January 2012.

Stephen has recently been appointed a non executive director at Derby Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.