

# Professional Nursing Leadership

Get it Right - RIGHT WORK PLACE

**RCN Wales believes it is imperative that there is professional nursing representation at the most senior level within each NHS health organisation, on the National Board and advising the Welsh Assembly Government.**

A professional nursing voice ensures that there is a clear line of professional accountability from the nurse at the bedside through to the Nursing Director on the Board of the NHS health organisation to the National Board Nursing Director and finally through to the Chief Nursing Officer. It ensures that services for patients are developed utilising the holistic nature of the nursing perspective and include the nursing role. The advantages of such a senior role are clearly identified in the Burdett Trust 2006 publication *Who Cares, Wins*.

The primary and essential function of the Chief Nursing Officer is to provide independent nursing advice to the Welsh Assembly Government. This role must be safeguarded. The office of the Chief Nursing Officer should also oversee the development of nursing policy. Finally the Chief Nursing Officer is also the most senior professionally accountable nurse in the country. This allows for an additional level of monitoring and action on nursing standards which of course impact directly on patient care and the patient experience.

The role of the Chief Nursing Officer should not be amalgamated with, or placed in a subordinate position to, that of any other health professional. To do so compromises the unique and independent role of any Chief Health Professional Officer. It is also wasteful of a potential resource. Given a clear budget and administrative support the professional advisor is best placed to deliver policy work that fall within their remit.

Nurses deliver the majority of direct patient care and it is important that they are empowered to improve the patient experience. It is significant that the title of a recent report which focused on Empowering the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse was **Free to Lead - Free to Care**.

It is important to generate leadership skills amongst nurses. This can be achieved through the empowerment of the nurse leader enabling her/him to exercise her/him own accountability and to have the authority to hold others to account for the standard of care patients receive. Nurses need to be self-aware of own skills, attitudes and interactions with patients and team personnel. They also require confidence to challenge the inevitable bureaucratic or set ways of a large healthcare organisation and initiate positive changes in clinical practice for patient care. Nurses must lead the way in ensuring caring is at the heart of healthcare.

## KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure there is professional nursing representation at the most senior level within each NHS health organisation and on the National Board.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should promote and protect the role of the independent Chief Nursing Officer.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should promote leadership skills within nursing at every level.



get it  
right



cymryd y  
camau  
cywir