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Cuts to training: what you need to know

Karen Ousey

Continuing professional development (CPD) for registered health-care professionals is an essential aspect of maintaining and developing knowledge and skills. This is achieved through conference attendance, study days, reading and reflecting on journal articles or attending credit based University courses. Indeed the NHS in the 2014 Five Year Forward View document¹ recognised the importance of empowering the workforce with skills, values and behaviours to allow for innovative care models to be implemented effectively in practice areas. Health Education England has until recently provided funds to allow for nurses, midwives and Allied Health Professionals (AHP) to attend university courses. This funding is provided to Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs) to allow NHS trusts to hold their own CPD budget that can be used to commission universities to deliver education and training, or they spend the funding directly with universities under Learning Beyond Registration (LBR) contracts. However, this English funding has been greatly reduced, up to 45% in some areas during 2016/17. Earlier this year the Council of Deans published a report² that explores these cuts reporting that they have been made because of a decision, at national level by HEE's board, to reduce workforce development funding by 49.1%.³

This reduction in funding will impact on nurses, midwives and AHPs ability to access CPD in the future. Practitioners will be expected to self fund to attend the course and some courses may be removed from university provision. Universities themselves are debating how they will deal with this cut in funding while ensuring that courses offered meet the needs of local NHS Trusts. Some are considering the use of master classes which would either offer a few university credits or indeed be unaccredited. Other options would be that students could pay on a flexible term for their courses. This change is affecting England at present but it is timely to ensure that all practitioners are aware of this. In my opinion it is time we ensure that tissue viability, leg ulcer management and other skin related courses are highlighted as those essential for staff to access, to continue their own professional development needs, and to maintain and improve quality outcomes for patients. I urge everyone to read the report on the Council of Deans website that gives their response to this cut in funding.³ It is also interesting to note that Dr Sarah Wollaston, (chair of the Commons Health Select Committee) speaking about £10bn extra being given to the NHS has questioned this amount

claiming 'a substantial part of the increase came from cuts of £3.5bn to health spending which fell outside the NHS budget, such as the public health grant to local authorities and education and training paid for by Health Education England'.⁴ Perhaps this is one area where the cuts have been made? As registered practitioners in England we all need to consider how we will access and fund future CPD if Trusts do not have the funding to support staff.

References

- 1 NHS (October 2014). Five Year Forward View. <http://tinyurl.com/oxq92je> (accessed 2 November 2016).
- 2 Council of Deans (2016) A false economy cuts to continuing professional development funding for nursing, midwifery and the Allied Health Professions in England Available from: <http://tinyurl.com/z7nahdj> (accessed 2 November 2016).
- 3 HM Treasury (2015). Spending Review and Autumn Statements 2015: Policy Paper. <http://tinyurl.com/ptrntos> 79–82. (accessed 2 November 2016).
- 4 Sky News (2016). Government's NHS funding claims not true - MP <http://tinyurl.com/hot9bbm> (accessed 2 November 2016).