

RadcliffesLeBrasseur



Care Home Briefing 81

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NMC to consider Regulation of Health Care Assistants

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) [1] have recently announced that they are commissioning research to analyse the potential risks and benefits of regulating health care assistants.

The NMC have confirmed that the findings of the research should be reported in the spring of 2010 and this will assist them in determining what, if any, action is required to protect the public through regulating health care assistants.

Health care assistants, or as the NMC refers to them, Health Care Support Workers (HCSWs) currently assist registered nurses and midwives in the provision of care and treatment to patients across many healthcare situations, but by far the largest cohort of care assistants work in care homes. At present there is no statutory regulation of such individuals and there has been growing concern about the risk that this poses to the public. The Chief Executive of the NMC, Professor Dickon Weir-Hughes, has commented as follows:

"The regulation of health care support workers operating below the level of registered nurses and midwives continues to raise questions regarding public protection. This is likely to increase as more and more activities previously undertaken by nurses and midwives are devolved to this, unregulated, part of the workforce. It is a concern that someone who has been struck off the register as, for example, a nurse working in a care home, can potentially continue working in care homes as an HCSW". [2]

In light of the NMC's recent announcement, it is likely that at some point in the future health care assistants and their equivalent will in some way be regulated. How this regulation will work is obviously yet to be defined, but in light of the Government's general approach to regulation, this is likely to be extensive. Obviously, if health care assistants and their equivalents are regulated, this will have a substantive impact on the care sector as a whole and we would advise those interested in this topic to regularly check the NMC website as well as our briefings for updates.

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MHRA GUIDANCE

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency have announced an important new source of safety information. The Agency has set up a web page specifically targeting care home staff to provide guidance, safety alerts and links to educational material.

The web address is:

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/safetyinformation/healthcareproviders/carehomestaff/index.htm>

Footnotes

1. The statutory body responsible for regulating nurses and midwives in the UK
2. See NMC website: www.nmc-uk.org/aArticle.aspx?ArticleID=4037

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