Editor
Nursing Times

21 December 2011

Dear Editor,

Following the debate in the House of Lords on 19 December 2011 on amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill relating to the regulation of healthcare support workers, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) wishes to clarify its position on this issue.

During the debate there were a number of references to the NMC and its perceived support for a system of mandatory regulation of healthcare support workers. The Council has discussed this matter on a number of occasions and has acknowledged the importance of enhanced protection for patients in particular and the public in general. However, to date there has been no formal policy decision by the Council regarding the nature of any proposed regulation nor of the most appropriate body to take responsibility for whatever system might be developed.

Patients, carers and the general public will welcome any initiative that enhances the skills, knowledge and competence of healthcare support workers. The announcement that Skills for Health and Skills for Care have been commissioned to develop common training standards and a code of conduct for healthcare support workers is a definite step in the right direction and we look forward to working with both organisations on this project.

Whilst the project will only address healthcare support workers in the NHS in England, we hope that it will be welcomed by stakeholders in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales where similar initiatives are taking place. The NMC’s regulatory remit is UK wide and that means that we regulate nurses and midwives who are delegating tasks to healthcare support workers on a daily basis.
We therefore look forward to working with the professions, the public, the Department of Health (England) and the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE), to ensure that these proposals for assured voluntary registration are an effective mechanism for public protection.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Professor Tony Hazell
Chair