

08 July 2020

(Sent via email only)

Private & Confidential

Mark de Garis
Strategic Lead for People Policy
States of Guernsey

Dear Mark

Re: Chief Nurse post

Following the departure of Professor Juliet Beal from the Chief Nurse post in Guernsey the RCN should like to understand what the plans and timeline are for the recruitment to this vacancy. We are aware that during the Covid-19 emergency, a temporary arrangement was put in place. Director of the Princess Elizabeth Hospital, Dermot Mullin has been overseeing nursing with support from the lead nurses across the specialities. In the longer term this arrangement is not satisfactory, and we are now experiencing challenges as services are restored across healthcare in Guernsey. We have heard rumours that the Chief Nurse post will be disestablished, and we are very clear this is not acceptable.

Following the damning NMC Extraordinary Review of nursing and midwifery services published in October 2014 a number of broad organisational concerns were identified relating to practice and management, governance, policies and procedures, the care environment and organisational culture and leadership. At the time Guernsey did not have a Chief Nurse, and the NMC review noted in the report that;

“Senior staff in HSSD recognised the need for stronger multi-disciplinary clinical leadership in the hospital and maternity services”

The NMC identified numerous significant failings and the report led, as you will be aware, to the resignation of the leadership team and temporary removal of nursing students from the island.

The report highlighted the urgent need for a permanent Chief Nurse post and Steve Hams was appointed on an interim basis in 2014 with Professor Beal subsequently appointed in 2015.

Guernsey is a small, separate jurisdiction to the UK, with close links to UK healthcare services, but it does not have its own system leaders or regulators for health care. The appointment of a Chief Nurse has enabled leadership and regulation of nursing to be more robust with clear governance being in place for nurses, nursing and patient care. As the largest workforce providing care to the population of Guernsey it is vital that services and staff are led by a highly skilled, experienced and inspirational nursing leader to ensure the public get high quality, contemporary care.

Professor Beal was instrumental in the introduction of the Care Values Framework which supports the Partnership of Purpose initiative; developed to transform the health and care economy of the Bailiwick. Deputy Heidi Soulsby has described how impressed she has been with the dedication and commitment of the hard-working team across Health and Social Care (HSC). The Chief Nurse role is integral to this work which has included the introduction of Safer Everyday, SCAPE audits, Care Certificates for the unregistered workforce and ensuring that nurses wellbeing is supported. It is vital now post Covid-19 that Guernsey does not lose the impetus these resources have brought which have a positive impact on the patient experience both in hospital and the community.

From the perspective of the RCN the role is pivotal for us. Recently for example, I have had a number of concerns in respect of the mental health service and the ability to escalate this appropriately without a Chief Nurse is reduced. There is no one with either the authority or necessary oversight of the service for the RCN to raise these concerns with. The lack of any regulatory body such as CQC only adds to the challenges and I consider this leaves nurses, the patients and the wider public at risk.

The NMC noted that the governance systems were immature when they carried out their review in 2014. The RCN does not want to see a return to a situation that compromises nursing. Nurses provide the majority of health and social care in Guernsey, they have significant breadth of expertise and knowledge access which must be recognised as being vital for both policy makers and providers. Nursing is a fast changing profession operating in an ever moving environment with new innovations, technologies, treatments introduced every day. It is easy to fall behind if focus is lost. Strong nursing leadership with a position of authority and influence at senior level within HSC and also able to advise the States policy makers is vital to ensure health services remain vibrant and nursing an attractive career in Guernsey.

We are seeking assurance that the recruitment process will commence as soon as possible to recruit a Chief Nurse who will be able to carry on the valuable work of Professor Beal to support the continued transformation of nursing and health and care services across the Bailiwick.

Yours sincerely

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