

South West Pay Cartel Letter to 20 Trust Chief Executives

I am writing to you to provide you with a copy of the Royal College of Nursing's report on the workforce profile in the South West which we have made public today.

This document, published by the RCN's Frontline First campaign, includes information from government sources, the NHS Staff survey and the RCN Frontline First database. It demonstrates the grave reality of the current health situation in the South West.

The enclosed report outlines the fact that the number of nursing staff in the South West region is falling, with a reduction of 2.16% between May 2010 and May 2012. Staff numbers are below the national average, but of serious concern is that the number of registered nurses in the South West fell by 3.54% in comparison to the national average of 1.16%. **The South West has had the highest drop of registered nurses of all SHAs.**

This situation runs in parallel to the fact that the region has the highest population of older people of all SHAs in England and older people have the greatest health needs.

Our report outlines the significant cuts that have already been made to services in the region. A move to localised pay would make it more difficult for Trusts to recruit to nursing posts in the South West, and there will be a further loss of nurses as they move to other areas that do offer NHS terms and conditions. This will create a skills deficit in the region that will impact on the ability of Trusts to provide high quality care.

Furthermore, the report highlights information gathered by the NHS staff survey that illustrates the already low morale of nursing staff in the South West. A move to localised pay, and a reduction in income, will have a further impact on morale. Staff who feel that they are not valued by their organisation will lose further trust and confidence in their employers. If they also feel unable to provide good quality care they will leave.

Any organisation operating with the belief that a move to localised pay will reduce staffing costs and lead to efficiency is, quite frankly, labouring under an illusion. The increased bureaucracy and need for constant negotiation will, in reality, increase costs and related expense, not decrease them.

Reducing pay, terms and conditions for South West staff is not the only choice you have. We appreciate these are difficult, uncertain times but there are other service solutions that should be considered that would not impact negatively on patient care. I urge your Trust to withdraw from the South West pay, terms and conditions consortium which is a distraction from the very real issues facing the South West.

Yours sincerely

Dr Peter Carter