

Written Ministerial Statement

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Consultation on language controls for nurses, midwives, dentists, dental care professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians

Monday 3 November 2014

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health (Dr Daniel Poulter): The Department of Health has been working with the General Dental Council (GDC), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI), along with other stakeholders to look at ways to ensure that the English language capability of nurses, midwives, dentists, dental care professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working in the UK is sufficient. We greatly value the contributions that healthcare professionals from all over the world have contributed, and continue to contribute to our NHS, but it is essential that they have a sufficient knowledge of the English language, in order to provide safe patient care. Earlier this year, changes were introduced to strengthen the law around language controls for doctors, by introducing language controls for European Economic Area (EEA) doctors wishing to practise in the UK. Ministers from the four UK Health Departments are firmly committed to improving public protection by preventing healthcare professionals who do not have sufficient knowledge of English from working in the UK.

Today the Government launched its consultation *Language Controls for nurses, midwives, dentists, dental care professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians – Proposed Changes to the Dentists Act 1984, the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001, the Pharmacy Order 2010 and the Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) order 1976*. The consultation document consults on proposals to amend the legislation governing the GDC, NMC, GPhC and PSNI so as to give them more explicit powers to satisfy themselves about the English language capability of EEA applicants for registration, as well as to take action where concerns arise about a registered professional's ability to communicate adequately in English. The draft Health Care and Associated Professions (Knowledge of English) Order 2015 has also been published alongside the consultation document.

The consultation will close on 15 December 2014 and the Government welcomes views on the proposals and invites comments through the consultation process.

Language Controls for nurses, midwives, dentists, dental care professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians – Proposed Changes to the Dentists Act 1984, the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001, the Pharmacy Order 2010 and the Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) order 1976 and the draft Health Care and Associated Professions (Knowledge of English) Order 2015 have been placed in the Library. Copies are available to hon Members from the Vote Office and to noble Lords from the Printed Paper Office.