**Statement**

17 November 2021

As the voice of the recruitment industry, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation is concerned to read “Staffing agencies triple rates as NHS and care homes fight over nurses" November 14.

Staff shortages are chronic, creating severe issues for many sectors across the UK, but are particularly acute within the NHS and social care, where there have been over 100,000 job vacancies for years. Brexit and the pandemic have exacerbated the problem. The REC’s monthly research has seen starting salaries and hourly wage rates at record highs, as workers negotiate higher rates from employers desperate to attract staff.

The vast majority of agencies operate within NHS workforce frameworks, which have fixed prices for wages set by NHS England and Improvement.  Frameworks are often mandatory across England. Escalated wages rates may be used by NHS trusts to make sure staffing levels are safe. Inflated wages are a short-term approach to the crisis but an obvious lever to use when public sector pay rates have not kept up with inflation.

The REC has long called for a comprehensive workforce review for the health and care sectors to address ongoing skills shortages.  Agencies are on the frontline of the labour market and so we have repeatedly offered to collaborate with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England on developing a longer-term plan for staffing the NHS.

The REC also has a robust compliance procedure to ensure and drive up standards in the recruitment industry. We can investigate any complaints received about one of our members.

Kate Shoesmith

Deputy Chief Executive