The RCN is in talks with the nursing regulator following concerns that a new draft code of conduct is incompatible with the way clinicians work, Nursing Standard has learnt.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) last month launched a four-week online consultation on its new draft code. The draft forbids nurses from using their professional status to 'endorse any healthcare products or services'.

Yet as part of NHS reforms, the government is encouraging nurses to set up their own enterprises and bid for contracts providing healthcare services. The draft differs only slightly from the existing code, which states that nurses must not use their registration status in the promotion of commercial products or services.

'Few nurses will escape the competitive choice-driven world, so this clause becomes much more significant'

RCN head of policy Howard Catton said: 'There has always been a clause in the code that talks about nurses not using their professional status to promote services and most have felt it does not apply to them. But with increased competition among healthcare providers and increased patient choice, such a clause has the potential to affect the overwhelming majority of nurses.

'Few will now escape the competitive choice-driven world, so this clause becomes much more significant than before. That is why we will be talking in detail to the NMC.'

In a statement the NMC said it hoped the draft clarifies the difference between offering services and endorsing or advertising products.

'We are in the process of rewriting our code because we feel it is not always as clear as it could be, and also because we feel it needs to be brought into line with modern working practices,' a spokesperson said.

'While we do not accept that the current version of the code prevents nurses or midwives from working independently, the new draft is likely to clarify the matter.' She added that the regulator welcomes comments from anyone who thinks any elements of the draft code are still unclear.

Consultation
A revised version of the draft code is expected to go before the NMC's governing council in June. A formal three-month consultation on the agreed code will then be launched.

The draft code also states nurses must arrange to meet people's language and communication needs, as well as take part in educational activities that maintain and develop performance. Nurses should respect and support people's rights to accept or decline treatment, it adds.

The code was last updated in November 2004. The consultation is available at www.nmc-uk.org

Freemasons bearing gifts visit A&E units

More than 300,000 teddy bears have been donated to children in A&E units across England by the Freemasons. The latest batch went to James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

A&E sister Sue Murphy said: 'What better than a symbol of comfort such as a teddy bear? It is fantastic.' Freemasons' Teesside organiser John Henry said the bears had received a warm welcome.

Freemasons bearing gifts visit A&E units

Moce than 300,000 teddy bears have been donated to children In A&E units across England by the Freemasons.

The latest batch went to James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

A&E sister Sue Murphy said: 'What better than a symbol of comfort such as a teddy bear? It is fantastic.' Freemasons' Teesside organiser John Henry said the bears had received a warm welcome.
Copyright of Nursing Standard is the property of RCN Publishing Company Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder’s express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.