

Chairs are Back!!

The long-awaited written report from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector has been released and it gives a resounding endorsement to our arguments about the removal of chairs from the pods (and other areas of the sessions). It states very clearly and in several places, that all donor care staff working in the pods should have chairs. This has always been the union position and it is a pity that we had to go down this route to get this confirmed, despite very clear instructions in the Health, Safety and Welfare Act that any job that can be done sitting down, should be done so and that proper seating should be provided.

Of course, once the inspector was on the team, she didn't limit herself to the pods. She also noted in her report that we needed better seating in the screening areas as well.

Despite the clear instructions in the report, management is still trying to delay the re-introduction of chairs. It is our view that chairs can now be used by anyone who would like to use them and are not limited to those with health problems. If any manager tells staff to remove their chair, we will take out a collective dispute and we will also go to the HSE for an enforcement order.

Management have long been aware that removing the chairs was probably illegal but chose to rely on advice from McKinsey's (who are not solicitors) that their system would not work without chairs. The HSE report makes it clear that you cannot compromise health and safety by claims of increased efficiency (not that OTP is proving more efficient anyway). The full report is available on the branch website.

Operational Transformation Programme

There will be a review of the Operational Transformation Programme (OTP) carried out in the next couple of months by a joint staff / management team. Our branch secretary, Paul Selby, will be one of the union reps sitting on this review. Please send all comments, both favourable and unfavourable to Paul by email to paulselby01@btinternet.com. All comments will be strictly confidential.

One of the main areas of concern is the continued mismatch between the number of donors coming to session compared to the number of staff that are available. This problem seems to be continuing despite the restoration of the blood stock levels. Teams are still returning to base one or two hours later than they used to. Even though the match between session attendance and staffing is one of the key parts of OTP, the NHSBT is struggling to come any where near their modest target of 60%. Nationally, around 47% of sessions meet the

target and in some areas, this is as low as 30%.

These are just a small example of the complaints about OTP. I have seen at least thirty other problems that have been sent to Paul to discuss at the review meeting.

Since the introduction of OTP, the level of donor complaints has been steadily rising. This may only be a coincidence but feel free to draw your own conclusions.

Opening Hours Project

You may be aware that there are currently trials going on about both extending session hours and bleed-through or continuous sessions. At the moment, these sessions are staff on a voluntary basis but it is clear that if they are deemed successful by the NHSBT, they will try to make these practices the norm for all staff. This will have major implications for terms & conditions and health & safety. There are two union representatives sitting on the committee that is overseeing these trials. They are Bev Easton and Carol Reed, both from Unison. Please get in touch with them if you have any comments about these trials.

The unions will not approve these trials until we are satisfied that the new working practices will not have a negative impact on the lives of our members. As many teams are already finishing an hour or more later due to the inability of our managers to match the number of staff with the number of donors, most of you will have a good idea how you will be affected by later opening. It is also now clear that the continuous sessions do not meet the legal requirements of the Working Time Regulations as it appears that staff are working more than six hours without a break. Staff will have to be given breaks during the bleed times and there will have to be two nurses so that they can also have breaks. This means that these sessions will have to be over-staffed which does not seem a good use of limited staff resources. If they are not over-staffed, donors will see many empty beds and increased queueing times.

Overpayments

Many staff have received letters from payroll asking for their agreement that money be returned that was accidentally overpaid since November 2007. This seems to be related to Agenda for Change protection which ended for these staff when the second stage of the pay award was given. While we do not dispute that some overpayments may have taken place, staff have the right to receive a full, detailed breakdown of the amount overpaid and the reasons that payroll think this is the case. They also have the right to negotiate a repayment plan that is more suited to their own

financial situation. This can be several years if that is what suits that member of staff.

Paul Selby has written a sample letter that can be used to reply to payroll. Contact your local rep for a copy of this letter.

Wendy McPherson Retires

After many years service with the Brighton collection team, Wendy McPherson has retired. Wendy was a valued member of the team and will be missed by all. We wish her well in her retirement.

Unite Represents You Best

We have just gained a member from one of the best-known nursing unions because they refused to represent her at the investigatory meeting leading to possible disciplinary action. It is clearly better to stop things at this stage rather than leave someone isolated, facing a panel of several managers who will usually decide that there is a case to put forward. If you want full representation, join Unite.

Advice to Members

If you are ever asked to meet with your manager, it is always best to take your union rep with you. Even if you think the meeting is not important, it is not unusual for management to bring up issues at the meeting that you were not informed about. Your reps are there to help you and it is easier to sort problems out at the start than to try and undo something afterwards.

Green Issues

This newsletter is being printed with a new font that reduces ink usage by 20% and is called 'Spranq eco sans'. It is available for download at www.ecofont.eu.

The Environmental Policy Group seems to have disappeared. I have made several attempts to find out when it is meeting and have been met by total silence. At a time of increased awareness of the dangers and costs of pollution, the NHSBT is lagging far behind many other NHS organisations in its actions to reduce carbon use.

The NHS Sustainable Development Unit has just released a series of proposals covering all areas of NHS activity. The paper is called Saving Carbon, Improving Health. The NHS is responsible for 5% of road transport in the United Kingdom and the report recommends measures to reduce this. One of the more radical

proposals is to have a flat rate for all modes of transport including bicycles and walking.

The report has been endorsed by Dave Prentis so we hope that their representative on the staff council will take this into account in any future Agenda for Change negotiations. Their last move was to raise mileage rates, especially for larger engines, which is not what the report recommends.

The full report is available for download at:
http://www.sdu.nhs.uk/page.php?area_id=2

The following are some websites covering green issues

www.nhsbikes.co.uk
www.envirowise.gov.uk
www.sustrans.org.uk
www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk
www.foe.co.uk
www.thecarbontrust.org.uk
www.ecofont.eu
www.sdu.nhs.uk



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Unite (T&G Section) Blood and Transplant Branch



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If you need help and your team is not listed,
contact any other representative on the above
list.

The branch website is located at:
www.tgwu-nhsbt-branch.org.uk and there is a blog
(web log) located at:
www.tgwu-nhsbt-branch.org.uk/blog

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officers. Amicus officers will be listed after the full
merger is completed.