Working together to deliver a quality service

Welcome to the latest edition of Inform – I hope the information it contains will help you keep up-to-date with the latest news about the development of NHS Professionals.

As we progress through our first year as a Special Health Authority our challenge over the coming months is to harmonise our systems across the organisation to ensure that we continue to deliver a quality, value for money service.

In support of this, I am pleased to announce that we intend to hold our service charge at the current level of seven and a half per cent for nurses and move to the agreed 10 per cent for our doctors’ service – enabling us to extend our service to support locums doctors through the appraisal and revalidation process.

Based on research we believe these charges represent good value for our partner Trusts.

Our core activity will continue to be the provision of a full service for the management of temporary staff for participating NHS employers, including staff supplied under Agency Framework Agreements (AFAs).

Our latest performance figures in London, for example, show Agency spend on nursing and midwifery staff fell by 4 per cent between 2001/2 and 2002/3 and further savings of 17.1 per cent are forecast for 2003/4 compared with 2002/3.

Going forward, we have a number of workstreams in place to assess best practice across the organisation and the findings of these projects will be used to inform the harmonisation work that we are looking to undertake. During this time our priorities will be:

- To ensure we have a local on-site presence dedicated to providing support to both the Trust and NHS Professionals staff as a consistent part of the service we offer
- To ensure we meet the needs of our customers by obtaining feedback on the development of our services
- To provide support with mandatory training in all areas
- To ensure that our call centres operating times match your requirements and are consistent across all areas
- To help improve business processes by developing common timesheet and booking forms

Clinical governance is high on our agenda and we are working on a number of projects to ensure that we share good risk management practices with our partner Trusts.

In support of this, I am delighted to welcome Richard McMahon, our new Director of Clinical Governance to our executive team. He will now drive forward this important part of our agenda.

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Paul Roche who has joined us as Director of Operations. Details about the expertise they have brought to our organisation are included in this newsletter and I am sure you will join me in welcoming their input to our future development.

I look forward to continuing to work with you.
Signing up with NHS Professionals gave the Trust an opportunity to concentrate on junior doctor recruitment so all posts could be advertised and recruited to in a shorter timescale than previously.

The statistics were revealed during the six-month review meeting at which representatives from the Trust and NHS Professionals Doctors met to discuss how the service was progressing since implementation in September 2003.

The meeting was also used as an opportunity for senior doctors and management at the Trust to discuss the progress of the partnership to date. In the afternoon other local Trusts, who have not yet implemented the NHS Professionals service, were invited to an open forum to get a first-hand account of how the partnership was working.

Michael Crowther, regional manager for NHS Professionals Doctors, said: “We really appreciate Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust’s support in helping host this event. Together we were able to put across a very positive message about how NHS Professionals can support Trusts as well as demonstrating in very practical terms the benefits of this partnership approach.

Philip Marshall, the Trust’s Assistant Director of Personnel and Development and lead for medical personnel added: “Due to the fact that the Trust now deals with just one body (NHS Professionals) for the booking of locum medical staff, this has allowed a significant release of staff time to concentrate on other key medical personnel issues such as International recruitment, European Working Time Directive/New Deal compliance, consultant contract and the implementation of Modernising Medical Careers.

“The Trust has recently given a presentation to the regional medical personnel forum on the success of the partnership with NHS Professionals. This has now been extended to include the implementation of NHS Professionals on-line induction for locum medical staff.”

NHS Professionals Doctors has cut the amount of time medical staffing officers at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust spend finding locum staff by 10 hours on average each week, leaving them free to concentrate on their other key duties.

NHS Professionals is to set up a working party to look at infection control issues as they affect NHS Professionals’ members and systems.

Dr Richard McMahon, the organisation’s Director of Clinical Governance, said: “We know nurses are critical for maintaining and improving standards of hand-washing and infection control practices.

“NHS Professionals nurses have added responsibility as they work in different healthcare settings on a daily basis. As a result, our staff should be exemplars of good practice.”

“To ensure that our staff have access to appropriate training, NHS Professionals has now signed up to an on-line MRSA training programme, which we are to make available to any pure bank staff interested in taking part.”

NHS Professionals is developing a new customer feedback process, which will help us to continue to develop our service so that it meets the needs of our existing and future partner Trusts.

The process will be implemented through a network of regional groups, which will feed into a national group.

These groups will provide a forum for stakeholders to contribute to the understanding of the trends in the temporary labour market and to determine what role NHS Professionals and partners can play in the development of strategies to help manage this market and impact on cost, quality and risk.

It will also allow NHS Professionals to share information on developments in the internal and external market for healthcare employees that will have a potential impact on the NHS and NHS Professionals.

It is anticipated that this approach will ensure that NHS Professionals and its key stakeholders, through consensus, work together to deliver these strategies.

We hope that you will take the opportunity to use the process and new regional stakeholder groups to express your views on how the service is progressing. We will be writing to you in the near future with full details of the stakeholder group meetings schedule.

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Teamwork between a Trust and NHS Professionals has succeeded 63.5 per cent bank fill rate for clerical staff.

St Mary’s Hospital NHS Trust was facing a high volume of non-nursing bookings.

NHS Professionals introduced a new co-ordinator, Steve Clark, to focus specifically on converting the high agency fill rate into either bank fill or providing management information to the Trust to enable them to convert into substantively employed posts.

Steve and his team worked closely with Mark Saddington, Recruitment Manager at St Mary’s and he tells us: “With NHS Professionals help, we have been able to convert 11 whole-time equivalent administration and clerical staff members into substantive posts and enabled us to reduce our A&C temporary staffing spend.”

The fill rate is continuing to trend towards bank, with a focused approach including regular meetings with ward and department managers and the provision of management information. Steve and his team are now currently achieving 63.5 per cent bank fill and this is trending positively month on month.

Working together to attract new staff

NHS Professionals North has set up an innovative partnership with Sheffield Job Centre Plus to encourage local job seekers to apply for posts with the organisation.

It is believed that this is the first time NHS Professionals has worked so closely with the government’s recruitment experts.

Elizabeth Ogden, a Field Account Manager for Job Centre Plus, is currently working with Jim Brimble, business manager for NHS Professionals North, to pull together a series of initiatives designed to raise awareness of NHS Professionals among jobseekers.

She said: “Many people shy away from working in the NHS because they see it as a very rigid, shift-orientated organisation.

“NHS Professionals, however, enables people who have either left or never been part of the NHS, to work in a way that fits in with the demands of their personal lives. It is this message that we are working hard to get across to our job seekers.

“Jim has also conducted workshops for our job centre advisors so they are fully up-to-speed with the opportunities afforded by NHS Professionals which enables them to direct appropriate candidates towards the organisation.”

ALB Review Going Forward

NHS Professionals Special Health Authority is currently working with the Department of Health on a business plan that will enable the organisation to continue to best meet the needs of its partner Trusts.

This follows the recent review into NHS Arms Length Bodies and the subsequent publication of the implementation framework by Health Secretary John Reid last month.

The Department of Health has recognised the value that NHS Professionals brings to the NHS and therefore the organisation will continue to operate as a Special Health Authority. It is expected to be self-financing by 2007-08.

Following this, NHS Professionals is expected to take on independent status and we anticipate sharing more details about this with you at a later date.

In the meantime, we will continue to work to ensure that we deliver a standard of service that meets your expectations as well as encouraging more staff who wish to work flexibly to view NHS Professionals as their employer of choice.
Ilford team recruits from its own flexible staff

Carol Randall, Polly Begum, Parminder Virdi and Claire Brown are among a number of new appointments at the Ilford Centre, which has seen a rapid growth in the volume of applications it now receives. Also new to the team are Raj Randhawa, Mohammed Islam and Sharon Nolan. They will be joined by Sukh Gill who has taken on the new role of Recruitment Co-ordinator. She started her career with the organisation as a Recruitment Assistant in June 2002, two months after the Ilford Centre had been inaugurated.

Paul Webb, Head of Human Resources, Communications and Marketing for NHS Professionals London, commented:

“That four of the recruitment assistants appointed have originally been flexible NHS Professionals workers is testament to the high quality of staff registered with us as well as proof that the organisation is attractive to job seekers in the local employment economy.

The new appointments coincide with the recruitment team’s move into a newly refurbished area and prompted a double celebration at Becketts House, where the Ilford Centre is based.

Other projects recently completed include:

- The successful completion of phase 1 of a new telephony system
- The transfer to a new payroll provider

The first part of the project to upgrade the London telephony system was completed in July and resulted in the alignment of call handling capabilities between the Paddington and Ilford call centre. Call flow and routing now matches the demands of the organisation’s business objectives and is part of the national telephony solution project.

The second stage, now underway, is to provide NHS Professionals with a single non-geographic number for staff, Trusts, PCTs and Mental Health Trusts. Assigning a non-geographical number to NHS Professionals:

- Offers customers and staff a seamless and efficient customer service across all regions
- Provides support in the event of a site experiencing problems by routing calls to other regions thus offering uninterrupted services to Trusts and staff

- Ensures the disaster recovery plans are seamless and effortless on a national basis
- Provides staff and Trusts local call rates irrespective of where they are calling from

The last stage of this project will mean NHS Professionals London will become part of the national call routing plan providing customers and staff with a seamless national service.

In addition, payroll staff have recently undertaken the transfer of thousands of staff onto the same system as that used by NHS Professionals North.

This has been carried out on a Trust and payroll provider basis to ensure that the London centres meet the NHS Professionals business objective of having one payroll provider. This will bring greater efficiencies in processing pay requests as well as providing staff with improved pay slips.

All NHS Professionals staff registered to Newham University Trust, Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospital Trust, Whips Cross University Hospital Trust, Great Ormond Street Hospital and West Middlesex University Hospital Trust have been successfully transferred. Other transfers are also planned across the London region.
Helping Trusts deliver a high standard of patient care

NHS Professionals has helped Surrey Hampshire Borders Mental Health Trust to achieve savings of £1.9 million in 2003-04.

The Trust was one of the first Mental Health Trusts to implement NHS Professionals in the South of England and started working in partnership with the organisation in April 2003.

At that time, the Trust had no centralised bank and in 2001-2002, spent £4,163,000 on agency staff. Following the implementation of NHS Professionals, the Trust now has over 400 pure bank staff and the number of agency shifts worked has dropped from 12,000 in 2002-03 to 7,000 in 2003-04. This means that the Trust’s spending on flexible staff has been reduced from £4,163,000 in 2001-2002 to £2,250,000 in 2003-04.

Fiona Green, the Trust’s Chief Executive, said: “Implementing NHS Professionals was part of our overall plan to take control of recruitment and address our vacancy problem. The service has helped us to improve our use of staff against a backdrop of organisational change brought about by merging with two other mental health Trusts.

“We had to alter our staff’s attitude to filling vacancies. Rather than automatically turning to agencies for a quick fix, we had to look at how we managed our own staff and how we could best use our own resources to fill shifts. NHS Professionals helped us to do this.”

Through the use of management information, provided by NHS Professionals, Surrey Hampshire Borders has raised awareness amongst Ward Sisters and Ward Managers of the additional cost of using temporary staff. In addition 23 substantive posts have been filled with staff originally recruited to NHS Professionals.

The rigorous recruitment and training policies of NHS Professionals ensure that standards are adhered to and maintained.

Fiona concluded: “With NHS Professionals, the processes are much more transparent. Previously there could have been inappropriate staffing decisions that went unnoticed but with NHS Professionals, everything is out in the open which forces better quality rostering and raised the staff profile on the ward.

“This obviously has a beneficial effect on our primary concern, which is improving patient care.”

Surrey Hampshire Borders is one of three Trusts in the South East who signed formal terms of business with NHS Professionals Special Health Authority on October 1st 2004. The others are Ashford and St Peters Hospitals NHS Trust and Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Trust. The Trusts have all previously worked in partnership with NHS Professionals through local service providers and this move marks a formal agreement with the new SpHA established in April 2004.

Healthcare Assistants work hard to shift the balance

A scheme that provides an opportunity for people new to the NHS (and new to care) to train and work as Healthcare Assistants is helping two Trent Trusts save thousands of pounds.

NHS Professionals undertook a massive recruitment campaign and, working in collaboration with Nottingham City Hospital and Queens Medical Centre, these Trusts organised and ran training courses - four at Nottingham City Hospital and a further one at Queen’s Medical Centre. An additional course is planned for later in the year.

To date 39 candidates have completed their training and are now working at both Trusts The programmes were unique in their approach to training interspersing classroom theory with clinical practice. All nurses were competency assessed throughout the two-week course.

Up to August 23rd, these staff worked a total of 924 shifts at Nottingham City and 417 at QMC. This has equated to a saving for the Trust of over £46,200 at Nottingham City and over £20,000 at QMC.

Over the last year, NHS Professionals has helped Nottingham City Hospital to increase the number of shifts being filled by almost 50 per cent and to reduce its agency spend by £127,568.

In April 2003, the Trust’s fill rate for Health Care Assistant shifts stood at 41.6 per cent bank and 29.71 per cent agency. After working with NHS Professionals to recruit, provide training packages and a comprehensive support plan for existing bank staff, the fill rate in April 2004 rose to 70 per cent bank and 22 per cent agency, representing over 1,000 shifts.

Recruitment figures for qualified nurses are also positive and the number of senior grade staff registered on the NHS Professionals bank is also increasing.
Paul and Richard join the team

The executive of NHS Professionals has been strengthened by the appointment of two new directors.

They are Director of Operations Paul Roche and Dr Richard McMahon, Director of Clinical Governance.

Paul joins NHS Professionals from Innovex (UK) Ltd where he was Director of Operations. His talents lie in strategy development and implementation, leading business and operational delivery in complex organisation, sales and marketing management and training and research.

He said: “My objective now is to look closely at the good practices that exist across the organisation and use these as a base for consistency and harmonisation on a national level.

“I will be looking to ensure that we are a customer-focused organisation. I feel that, by listening to and working with our partner Trusts, we will be able to build a service that totally understands and responds to their needs. Understanding their needs will be the key driver for operational improvement.”

Richard, our new Director of Clinical Governance, brings a wealth of knowledge to the organisation from his previous 10 years as a Director in acute, community and mental health services. Originally a nurse, he joins NHS Professionals from Milton Keynes General NHS Trust where he was Director of Nursing.

Previously Richard has served as a member of the National Steering Group for the Nursing and AHP Leadership Programme at the Modernisation Agency, the Standards and Ethics Committee, for the UKCC and the RCN working party that published ‘Standards of Care for Nurse Management’ in 1990. He qualified as a Doctor of Philosophy (nursing research) at the Department of Nursing Studies, King’s College, University of London.

He is currently Associate Editor of the Journal of Nursing Management and a member of the Editorial Board for the British Journal of Nursing.

“Paul and Richard have excellent track records in their previous roles and I am sure their contribution will be a key factor as we rise to the challenge of helping the NHS address its flexible staffing needs.”

Sharing the care

A new nursery at Burnley General Hospital has opened its doors to the children of NHS Professionals staff.

The Buffer Bears nursery has been holding a series of open days to enable staff to have a look around and meet its team of carers.

Linda Lord, NHS Professionals Nurse Facilitator at Burnley Hospital, said: “This is another example of how Trusts and NHS Professionals can work together to support the Improving Working Lives agenda.

“The fact that we can now help with childcare also encourages staff to work with us.”

Plans to harmonise financial services

NHS Professionals is currently working on a project to harmonise financial processes across the organisation.

This work involves the roll-out of a new, standard booking form and timesheet together with the establishment of a national finance and payroll centre.

Currently timesheet checking and pay inputting, financial transaction processing and financial management functions in NHS Professionals are delivered from six major service centres. The move to a single finance base will support NHS Professionals’ drive to provide an efficient service that offers value for money for its partner organisations.

This will be achieved through the use of the latest modern scanning technology coupled with the introduction of a standard timesheet and booking form.

It is anticipated that the organisation’s largest regional finance department, which is based in West Yorkshire, will form the base for the new centre. Regional offices will retain financial management functions to provide local financial management and business decision support.

A consultation exercise has now started with staff at the six existing service centres.

We will share details of how the project is progressing in our next edition.

If you want to comment on any subject please contact feedback@nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk