

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)-17-16(p7)

Meeting date: Thursday 30 November 2006

Location: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Agenda for Change – additional information supplied by RCN

I write with regard to our evidence session on Agenda for Change on the 24th May 2006. You may recall that a member of the Committee (Karen Sinclair AM) raised her concerns that the job-matching process of Agenda for Change could be manipulated to ensure financial savings for the NHS Employer. We promised at the time to look into this matter and return to the Committee with our findings.

The RCN's Employment Relations officers continue to receive anecdotal information from members expressing concern. The reported complaint at both a UK and Wales level is that financial pressures are being used to limit some job evaluation results. RCN Wales has no firm evidence to substantiate these concerns. An attempt to elicit information from the Pay Modernisation Unit in respect of a breakdown of nursing grades prior to and post Agenda for Change and the situation at an individual trust level has not been successful. The explanation the RCN has received is that this is due to a combination of factors; namely the nature of the job evaluation software and the subgroup's policy on information sharing. The information we have received is sufficient only to demonstrate that 57.1% of nursing posts that have been subjected to the Computer Aided Job Evaluation software have been banded at Grade 5 and 6. However the fact that RCN Members perceive that job-matching is being driven by financial pressure is of continued concern to RCN Wales. We believe that this should also be of concern to those who manage the Health Service in Wales.

However we are beginning to find evidence of specialist nursing posts being disadvantaged compared with their therapist colleagues. I provide a comparison between National Profiles (a National Profile is a job description used to make decisions of banding in AFC and is the result of negotiation by staff side and the Job Evaluation working party) below to illustrate our concern:

Factor 1 Communication

(The evidence used is almost identical in each case, as would be expected from the same client group)

- Psychologist scores at level 6
- Art Therapist scores at level 6
- Specialist Psychiatric Nurse scores at level 5

- So from factor 1, the nurse is already 15 points behind her colleagues.
- Factor 6 Responsibility for patient client care.
- Psychologist scores 6
- Art Therapist scores 6
- Specialist Psychiatric nurse scores 5
- The Psychologist and Art Therapist score a 6 because they are seen as giving specialist care. The specialist nurse is not regarded as doing so.
- This now results in the nurse lagging 24 points behind her colleagues.

Factor 14 Mental effort

- (This measures the concentration required for a post)
- Psychologist scores 5
- Art Therapist scores 3-4
- Specialist Psychiatric Nurse scores 2-3
- Although these professions are all giving one to one psychotherapy to the same patient group - the specialist nurse scores 13 points less than the psychologist, and 5 points less than the art therapist.

Factor 16 Working conditions

- Psychologist scores 4
- Art Therapist scores 4
- Specialist Psychiatric Nurse scores 3
- As a result the nurse scores approximately 43 points less than her colleagues in the same clinical environment, with the same patient group.
- The psychologist arrived at a score of 493-531 resulting in a band 7 (£24800-£37400)
- The art therapist arrives at a score of 544-595 giving a band 8a/b (£33900 to £50700)

- The specialist nurse, working with the same patients in a similar clinical role scored
- 430-463 giving a band 6 (£20900-31000)
- The previous salary for this type of nurse would have been £25,245 -£30,720, a drastically reduced starting salary, with a concurrent loss of £634-00 per annum.

This is small but representative selection of the bias against nurses which runs through the scoring system.

RCN Wales will continue to monitor the situation closely and if there is further concrete evidence to support RCN Members concerns we will advise you accordingly and of course pursue these with the relevant employers.

Tina Donnelly
Director, RCN Wales