

Disabling Practice? Enabling Nurses

DISABILITY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 1 MARCH 2000

Welcome to this first Disability Network Newsletter. Following the recent RCN conference **Disabling Practice? Enabling Nurses** held at **Baden-Powell House** in London we have decided to circulate a regular newsletter to act both as a contact point for nurses with an interest in disability and provide topical and relevant information about disability. This is the first edition and we welcome any contributions, resources or short articles that will be of interest to our readers. The conference has certainly started the disability awareness work of the RCN off in earnest and we hope to run further disability events as the year progresses. At the conference RCN General Secretary **Christine Hancock** told delegates that the RCN proposed to hold a series of regional events on disability awareness, one in each region of the country. "We are looking for nurses who would like to work with us in developing disability awareness initiatives in their own localities". Are you interested in holding a local event?

News

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IN EQUIPMENT SERVICES FOR OLDER OR DISABLED PEOPLE

Standards of disability equipment services are unacceptably low in some parts of the country according to an Audit Commission report just published. Patterns of service provision lead to inequality and inefficiency.

[Fully equipped](#) examines the services that are

provided to 2 million people who use an NHS hearing aid; 1 million users of community equipment services; 750,000 wheelchair users; 400,000 users of orthopaedic shoes and callipers (orthotics) and 65,000 users of artificial limbs (prosthetics). These services provide a gateway to independence and dignity for many older or disabled people. The report findings include:

- Users are often not asked basic questions about the sort of help that they need. A recent survey revealed that only 36% of new wheelchair users were asked what they wanted from their chairs; also many users are not given sufficient information or training in how to use them;
- Users often have to wait for long periods of time for their equipment - for example, the average wait from a GP referral to the fitting of a hearing aid is 19 weeks, and in one-fifth of health authority areas, it is over six months;
- Equipment is not always suitable - one quarter of people who need an artificial limb do not use it as often as they would like because of poor fitting;
- Equipment is not always of a high quality - NHS hearing aids are largely based on 1970s analogue technology that has now been superseded by the digital revolution;
- The current organisation of equipment services is a recipe for inequality and inefficiency - many equipment services are small and fragmented, and are characterised by a lack of clinical leadership and senior management involvement. Audit Commission recommendations include:
- Users need to be involved and consulted much more closely at all levels of health and social services as well as with manufacturers, to provide equipment that is tailored to users' needs and lifestyles;

- The restructuring of mobility services so that clinical leadership at specialist centres is provided to improve the quality of local services;
- The integration of health and social services provision for community equipment and audiology services using the new powers under the 1999 Health Act;
- The Department of Health should raise the profile of these services through the National Priorities Guidance, and specific reference should be included in the forthcoming National Service Framework for Older People;
- Quality improvement plans need to be introduced and implemented as a high priority where equipment services are poor.

This report is the second in a series by the Audit Commission looking at the services received by older people and how they can be improved. In particular the Commission is looking at ways to promote the independence of older people and how health, social services and other local government services can support this. 'Forget me not' covered mental health services for older people, and future topics will include home care charging and rehabilitation.

Andrew Foster, Controller of the Audit Commission, said:

"Several million people depend on equipment such as hearing aids, wheelchairs or artificial limbs, which have the potential to make or break the quality of their lives as well as the lives of the 1.7 million family or friends who care for them.

"While some areas are making good progress, the quality of equipment services is unacceptably poor in many parts of the country. Long waiting times, unclear eligibility criteria and poor quality products threaten to undermine plans to promote independence in the community. A higher priority needs to be given to these services at all levels of the NHS".

[*Fully Equipped - The provision of equipment to older or disabled people by NHS trusts and social services departments in England and Wales <brdiseq.htm>*](#) (ISBN 1 86240 2132) is available from Audit Commission Publications on 0800 502030, priced £20.

WILL YOU BE AT CONGRESS?

This year's RCN congress in Bournemouth will see the second Disabling Practice? Enabling Nurses workshop in the series of events the RCN is organising to raise awareness of disability and nursing. The event will have both Michael Freeney from Disability Matters and Ruth Northway from the University of Mid Glamorgan speaking. Contact Felicity Adegbuyi at the RCN for further details Tel 0207 647 3739

Welcoming patients with disabilities

The Grass Roots Group PLC and Churchill Friend Ltd have produced 'Welcoming Patients with Disabilities'. It aims to help readers:

- Understand the barriers disabled patients face
- Find out more about the law and disabled people
- Understand how to meet the needs of particular groups of disabled people and improve your communication skills.

Further details are available from:
The Grass Roots PLC
Pennyroyal Court
Station Road, Tring Herts HP23 5QZ
Tel 01442 829 400

Examples of good practice

Do you have an example of good practice, which shows how nurses can work with disabled people to ensure a high quality of service provision? Would you be willing to share it with others? Unfortunately we often hear examples of how disabled people have received a poor quality service from the Health Service. We also know that there are examples of good practice out there but, unfortunately, these do not always get publicised. If we are to improve the service, which is offered to disabled people, then it is important that we share our experiences and learn from each other.

I would like to hear from you if you have positive examples, which you would be willing to share with other people. These might relate to nursing practice, education or research. Perhaps some could be featured in future editions of this newsletter and all could be kept in a database as a resource. Please send details of the initiative and a contact person to:

Ruth Northway
Senior Lecturer School of Care Sciences
University of Glamorgan
Pontypridd CF37 1DL Tel: 01443 483177

Conferences

Solihull Bioethics Conference

'The Right to Live and be Different'

In February this year, 130 disabled people and parents, delegates from Disabled People International organisations in twenty-seven countries in Europe, African, Australia and North America, met in Solihull, UK to discuss bioethics and human rights. The conference established a consensus declaration which follows the philosophy encapsulated in the Phrase; "Nothing about us without us". The following excerpt is directly from the declaration "We are full human beings. We believe that a society without disabled people would be a lesser society. Our unique individual and collective experiences are an important contribution to a rich, human society. We demand an end to the bio-medical elimination of diversity, to gene selection based on market forces and to the setting of norms and standards by non-disabled people." Within it there is also a commitment to forge constructive links with health professionals. In the light of genetic testing and its implications for the whole of society, such that our genetic profile, if known, may result in refusals on application for insurance or mortgages, the ethics of bio-technology assumes great importance to us all, not least to disabled people.

Forthcoming event – call for papers

RCN Rehabilitation nurses forum conference
"Rehabilitation nursing: bringing the future into focus"
13-14th October 2000 in Newcastle upon Tyne.
Deadline for receipt of abstracts is 1st May 2000.
For more information, please e-mail Elaine Sedgwick E-mail to elaine.sedgwick@rcn.org.uk
or phone the RCN conference unit Tel 0207-647 3856

Nursing students news

Deaf Students Gain Access to pre-registration Nurse Education

Six deaf students will commence pre-registration education programmes in mental health nursing at Salford University in the autumn 2000 intake. This will be the first time that deaf students have been able to gain access to pre registration nurse education and this constitutes a major landmark achievement in equal opportunities. The successful outcome can be attributed to the sustained efforts of National Interest Team for Mental Health Deaf Services working over the last six years which the Board has actively supported.

The deaf students will participate in a major pilot project, which is a response to identified service need. The project has been developed as a result of joint work between Greater Manchester West Education and Training Consortia, The NHS Executive North West, the University of Salford and the National centre for Mental health and Deafness Salford. The project aim is to create an educational environment that is accessible, supportive and effective for deaf people which will enable deaf students to attain the qualification of Registered Mental Nurses and progress to become employed in services where they are valued for their professional and linguistic skills.

The project aims to benefit deaf clients within mental health services by providing positive, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate role models and improved communication access in the clinical area. It will have major impact on issues such as assessment, treatment and involvement in care, the design of nursing research and development of evidence based practice designed for or adapted to meet the needs of deaf people by deaf people.

The pilot has major implications for disabled people in Britain who rarely find employment within the health service especially within qualified posts.

Further information can be obtained from

- Sandra Beswick, Head of Mental Health Studies, University of Salford. Tel 0161 295 2999
- Sue Dean Project Lead, Consortia Lead Office, Trafford health Care NHS Trust Tel 0161 746 2746 or
- Peter Mc Andrew Education Officer (Mental Health) ENB York

Students with dyslexia

David Wright from the University of Sheffield d.j.wright@sheffield.ac.uk David is supporting nursing students with dyslexia and has a web site at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~md1djwt/>

Clinical Placement Access for Nursing Students with Impairments

The School of Healthcare Studies at the University of Leeds has for the past three years been carrying out research, funded by The Higher Education Funding Council for England, into the barriers facing nursing students with physical or sensory impairments. Interviews with 39 members of the nursing profession revealed a number of environmental, organisational and social barriers that currently prevent students with impairments from entering the nursing profession. As a result of this research the School has designed an audit tool that assesses the suitability of clinical placements for students with impairments. The tool measures the suitability of placements under four criteria: work standards, safety standards, accessibility standards, and outlook standards.

Further details are available from Sangeeta Richhariya-Leahy (Research Officer) by e-mail: sangeeta@slbd.u-net.com

Publications

New RCN Publications from April 2000

Rehabilitating older people: the role of the nurse

Publication code 001 058, April 2000
Re-enablement means helping people to adapt to changes in their life. This document looks at the role of nurses in the re-enablement of older people. It looks at rehabilitation plans and the education of nurses for this role.

Sexuality and sexual health in nursing practice: an RCN discussion and guidance document for nurses who want to develop their nursing practice in the field of sexuality and sexual health

Publication code 000 965
This guidance has been developed to help nurses work effectively in the challenging and sensitive field of sexuality and sexual health and emanated from a 1998 Congress resolution submitted by the RCN Learning Disabilities forum. It is aimed at nursing staff working across a range of settings from hospital to care home, and is intended to help

shape and inform their nursing practice. Health care organisations too may be influenced to develop policy that addresses the sexuality and sexual health needs of patients.

Workability - injured, ill and disabled nurses can return to work

Publication code 001 175, April 2000
This document launched under the Working Well initiative, looks at the advantages of employers having a positive approach to rehabilitation. It also looks at what employers must do by law, particularly under the Disability Discrimination Act. It also gives a series of real-life case studies, and provides guidance for drawing up and implementing a model rehabilitation policy.

Press

Recent press highlighting the problems nurses with a disability face

Dinsdale P (2000) Willing and able *Nursing Standard*. 14(27) 12-13

Newsletter Contacts

If you wish to contribute to this newsletter please send your contributions to

Sue Thomas Nursing Policy & Practice Adviser. Royal College of Nursing 20 Cavendish Square London W1M 0AB Tel 020 647 3743

(Email: sue.thomas@rcn.org.uk)

The following people are our local points of contact for disability.

Phillip Scullion Senior Lecturer University of Coventry

(Email: pscullion@coventry.ac.uk)

Ruth Northway Senior Lecturer University of Mid Glamorgan Wales

(Email: rnorthway@glam.ac.uk)

Sally Davies Senior Lecturer Oxford Brookes University Oxford

(Email: smdavis@brookes.ac.uk)

Dave Thompson Disability Adviser Warrington Community Health

(Email dave.thompson@warrchc-tr.nwest.nhs.uk)