Dear Colleagues

You should all now be aware that the RCM is consulting with members in England about potential changes to Agenda for Change. Can all Workplace Reps in England make sure they have organised a meeting to discuss the changes with members and they submit a response on behalf of their Workplace/Branch to the consultation. Please email AgendaforChange@rcm.org.uk with details of the meeting so we can advertise the meetings.

The new course brochure for 2013 has been published, make sure you book your place early on the courses you want to attend. As usual you can download a letter requesting time off for Trade Union duties from the RCM website.

The Royal College of Midwives

Agenda for Change Consultation in England

The RCM, along with the other NHS Trade Unions has been involved in difficult and complex negotiations with employers about Agenda for Change.

NHS Employers have consistently made the argument that due to the current financial restraint on the NHS they have to make amendments to Agenda for Change to ensure it is sustainable for the future. They have said that unless savings are made more and more employers will attempt to move away from Agenda for Change and form their own terms and conditions.

During the summer NHS Trade Unions, including the RCM, consulted with staff sides in England over the proposed changes to Agenda for Change. Staff sides indicated that negotiations should take place to guarantee national terms and conditions. National negotiators have been working hard to reach an agreement with employers that retain as much of Agenda for Change as possible.

The RCM Board met and discussed the proposals and have agreed to consult with members in England via the Branch/Workplace structure. The consultation will run from Friday 11th January to Monday 4th February.

Each RCM Branch/Workplace in England should hold a meeting during this period to discuss the proposals then the Workplace Rep/Branch Officer should respond to the consultation on behalf of the Branch/Workplace. Members can respond individually if they are unable to attend the Branch/Workplace meeting.

Branches/Workplaces will be asked if they accept or reject the proposals. The proposals come as one single package so we will need to accept or reject all of them – they cannot be broken down into parts. The Branch/Workplace should discuss the proposals and come to a consensus and either accept or reject the proposals.

It is the RCM’s view that these proposals represent the most effective way of providing stability and protecting Agenda for Change as a national system of pay, terms and conditions. The alternative would be employers all over England breaking away from the national arrangements leading to cuts in pay, annual leave, sick pay and unsocial hours payments.

Workplace Reps should organise a meeting during the consultation period and email the details of the meeting to AgendaforChange@rcm.org.uk
Agenda for Change Consultation in England

We believe that supporting these national changes is better than risking individual or groups of employers making their own changes to terms and conditions and therefore moving away from having a national system of pay, terms and conditions.

Broadly, the proposed changes are:

- To introduce a clause stating that progression through all pay points in all bands will be conditional upon individuals demonstrating that they have the requisite knowledge and skills/competencies for their role.
- The last two points in bands 8c, 8d and 9 will become annually earned and it will depend on performance if the point is retained (those who are already on the top two points will not be affected by the proposal).
- Local employers will have flexibility to determine if posts with a job evaluation score of over 630 (i.e. posts in Band 8c, 8d and 9) will be covered by alternative pay arrangements. (Currently employers have flexibility over posts with a job evaluation score of over 720.)
- To remove the accelerated pay progression for new entrants to Band 5 so rather than fast tracking through two pay increments in their first year they will move through one increment each year.
- Pay during periods of sickness absence will not include unsocial hours payments apart from staff on pay points 1-8 or anyone whose absence is due to a work related injury or disease.

There will be guidance for organisations conducting workforce re-profiling highlighting the importance of local engagement with Trade Unions and staff at an early stage. This guidance has been included in response to the concerns raised by Workplace Reps that the downbanding of posts was on the increase.

These changes will only apply to England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Health Departments are clear that they are not seeking any changes to be made to Agenda for Change terms and conditions.

Resources

You can find out more about the proposals by visiting our website and clicking Support at Work/Agenda for Change. There are four documents you can download for more information which you can find by clicking on Further Information. The documents are:

- The NHS Staff Council document ‘Proposals on changes to the Agenda for Change agreement’
- RCM Workplace Reps Briefing document
- RCM Members Briefing document
- Frequently asked Questions

If you have any questions or need to get in contact about the consultation please email AgendaforChange@rcm.org.uk.

How to respond

The consultation is running from Friday 11th January to Monday 4th February in England only.

To complete either your Branch/Workplace response or your individual response please click here: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RCMAgendaforChangeConsultation
New Benefit for Members

The RCM has launched RCM Direct. This is the new single telephone number (0300 303 0444) for members to call the RCM. Calls to this number cost the same as a local call and are included in mobile bundle minutes.

RCM Workplace Representatives are still the first point of contact if they need support at work. However, if a member needs to contact the RCM for another reason e.g. a membership enquiry they should use the new single telephone number.

Labour Research Department Website Access for Workplace Reps

Many of you will be familiar with the Labour Research Department from the booklets used at the training courses. The Labour Research Department is a 100 year old organisation linked to various trade unions that carries out research and issues publications about workplace issues.

The RCM has arranged for our Workplace Reps to gain online access to LRD materials. You can access the materials by visiting their website [www.lrd.org.uk](http://www.lrd.org.uk) and entering the username ‘rcmrep’ and password ‘rcmrep’.

Workplace Reps Training Brochure 2013

In developing the courses for 2013 we took on feedback from the survey we conducted last year and shortened the five day courses to four day courses. You can book a place on any of the courses by visiting the website and clicking on [Campaigns and Events/Workplace Reps Training](#).

The upcoming courses are:

- **New Stewards’ Course**  
  28th-31st January  
  Coventry

- **Defending Agenda for Change Course**  
  25th - 27th February  
  Nottingham

National AIDS Trust resources on HIV, recruitment and employment

Currently, around 100,000 people are living with HIV in the UK and often they are unaware of the rights in the workplace. The National AIDS Trust has produced two publications on HIV and employment ‘HIV@Work’ and ‘HIV + Recruitment’. Both publications help to increase members’ awareness of current protections against HIV related discrimination and harassment. Both publications can be downloaded from the National AIDS Trust’s website [www.nat.org.uk](http://www.nat.org.uk).

Midwives Rules and Standards

The NMC has released a new publication ‘Midwives Rules and Standards’ which is available to view and download from the NMC website and will come into force on 1st January 2013. The publication can be downloaded here: [http://www.nmc-uk.org/Publications/Standards/](http://www.nmc-uk.org/Publications/Standards/)

New Director of Services to Members at the RCM

As reported in the last briefing, there has been restructure of the RCM with a new department called ‘Services to Members’ who will be responsible for, among other things, Workplace Reps training courses and will oversee the delivery of the RCM Organising Strategy. The new Director of Services to Members, Suzanne Tyler, started on 7th January 2013.

Suzanne previously worked as Associate Director, Maternity and Newborn Programme at the NHS South of England. She has previously spent three years as the Deputy Chief Executive at the Institute of Health Service Management and from 1990-1997 was Head of Policy at the RCM.
Rosemary Exton, RCM Board Member and RCM Steward, writes about the upcoming election for the RCM Board and encourages you to stand for election...

The RCM Board elections are in Summer 2013 and I would urge RCM Stewards to consider standing for election! I have been proud to serve on the RCM Board since 2007 and alongside five other Board Members my term of office ends August 2013.

As a Council member and subsequently Board Member I have fought for a more democratic RCM. I opposed the creation of a Board dominated by senior managers which lacked diverse voices from the midwifery community.

I have been proactive in shaping new RCM governance structures and fighting to give the RCM trade union role the prominence it must have. This is your opportunity now. When working conditions and service quality are under threat it is vital that the concerns of all midwives are heard at RCM Board. That is why I am encouraging you to stand in this critical election!

The forthcoming election is for RCM Board Members who will take up office on 1 September 2013. The term of office is four years. Applicants have to get the first form (eligibility declaration) in by 1st February.

About the Board
As a diverse and dynamic group with a remit for leading on the strategic objectives and direction of the RCM, I feel that it is important that the RCM Board includes the voice and experience of one or more members who are active RCM Trade Union representatives. RCM Board members are members of the RCM elected to office by members of the RCM.

Following the 2010 Governance Review the RCM Council was replaced by a new RCM Board of twelve members who are Directors of the RCM and Board of Trustees. The RCM Board has overall responsibility for the RCM and must ensure that the RCM is viable, properly governed and properly managed.

There are about five Board meetings a year and you will be invited to sit on one of the committees which may meet two to four times a year. You will also attend the Annual RCM Conference. A significant amount of preparation for meetings is required. This includes reading papers, conducting your own research where necessary, informally discussing matters with other Board members and RCM staff and managing the email and other communications which are an inevitable part of a Board member’s role. Between the regular meetings there are sometimes issues to consider and occasionally teleconference meetings are held if discussion is required. The majority of meetings are held in London but to accessibility to members the Board hold some Board meetings in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is important to discuss with your manager whether the Trust will give you time – however I found that despite having agreed time for the Board meetings I had to do 50% of all commitments and travel in my own time. Travel and subsistence are paid and accommodation is provided the night before the meetings.

How to apply
As a Trade Union all members are entitled to stand for election to the RCM Board. It is for this reason that there are two pathways in the election process:

1) You can choose to attend the assessment centre and depending on the results of this you may be invited for an interview. If you do go forward as a candidate in 2013 the members of the RCM who vote in the election will receive a statement about you from the assessment panel. The statement will include one of the following overall competence ratings which will be assigned to you by the assessment panel. Both this statement and your election address will be distributed with the voting papers.

2) You can choose to bypass the assessment and interview process and submit your election address for the membership vote. If you choose to go forward as a candidate without completing the assessment process the members of the RCM who vote in the election will be informed that you chose not to complete the RCM’s assessment process and, therefore, the assessment panel has no view of your competence.

Make sure your election address gives sufficient information about your experience, competence and enthusiasm - You have plenty of time to write it and submit it before 1st June 2013!

You can find out more about how to apply by clicking here.

With very best wishes

Rosemary Exton