

NHS celebrates excellence in reducing workplace injuries

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An Isle of Wight back care advisory team has won the top award in a national competition designed to encourage the NHS to reduce workplace injuries.

Run by NHS Employers, in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Back in Work Awards celebrate the best of NHS occupational health and safety practice in reducing back and other musculo-skeletal injuries. The annual awards are part of the national Back in Work Campaign.

Injuries from manual handling accidents account for 40 percent of all sickness absence in the NHS and cost the service around £400 million each year.

NHS Employers Back in Work Campaign organiser Mary Newsome said: "Back injuries not only cost the NHS money through sickness absence, they can also have a devastating effect on individual staff members. One in four nurses has taken time off work with a back injury sustained at work. Some people have had to end their career and some are so badly affected they even find simple household tasks difficult or impossible. Workforce injuries are a very important issue. By tackling it head on, NHS employers will gain healthier, happier staff who are fit for work."

Presented at the National Occupational Health and Safety Conference this week by NHS Confederation chief executive Dame Gill Morgan, the awards have five categories. The overall prize went to Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust for the work of its back care advisory team. Other winners were East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Causeway Health and Social Services Trust in Northern Ireland, East Sussex County Healthcare NHS Trust, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

"We want to congratulate all our winners for their achievements," said Mary Newsome. "They are all good examples of best practice. Prevention of musculo-skeletal injuries requires a coordinated approach with risk assessment and sometimes innovative ways to delivering training. Trusts need to remember that back injuries are not just caused by people lifting heavy loads. They can happen to anyone if they not trained in proper manual handling techniques. They can easily affect nurses at 23 or chief executives at 55 and the effect can be as devastating and life changing for one as for the other."

Judy Green, back care advisory team manager at Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust, said: "We are delighted to have won the award as it gives some recognition to the work that is going on in this trust to reduce injury and musculo-skeletal problems. The Back in Work Awards enables trusts to share good practice so that they don't have to keep reinventing the wheel."

Category winners

Overall Winner/Stakeholder Engagement with Successful Outcome:

Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust has an integrated and comprehensive approach to reducing musculo-skeletal injuries among its staff. All staff are trained in moving and handling during induction, all accidents and incidents are risk assessed and back care advisory team members are promoting return to work programmes that allow staff who have been off sick to return slowly according to their situation. One improvement made by the back care advisory team is the purchase of two powered bedpushers that push beds/trolleys around hospital corridors.

For further information, please contact Viv Bennett, Communications Manager at Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust on 01983 534184.

Most Improved Service:

East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust has introduced bespoke ambulances with specialist patient handling equipment to transport "urgent" patients, a role traditionally carried out by Accident and Emergency ambulances. These are patients that a GP has requested should be taken to hospital by ambulance. Increasingly, the ambulance service is being asked to transport larger and heavier patients. The urgent ambulances have a range of patient lifting equipment, which include hoists, emergency lifting cushions, specialist stretcher trolleys and a battery operated stair climbing chair. Staff are trained in their use to reduce musculoskeletal injuries. Benefits have included a reduction in the risk of injury

to patients and to staff; a fall in staff sickness among urgent ambulance crews and freeing up of A&E ambulances to respond to emergency calls.

For further information, please contact Phil Morris, PR and Communications Manager at East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust on 07770 684 927.

Evidence of Problem Solving:

Mothers in labour are being encouraged to adopt alternative birthing positions to benefit both themselves and their babies. However, these positions can increase the risk of musculo-skeletal injury to midwives. Causeway Health and Social Services Trust in Northern Ireland has produced a range of patient information leaflets and posters to promote alternative birthing positions to protect mothers, babies and midwives. Trust maternity staff have also undergone training in these positions.

For further information, please contact Tara Cunningham, Public Relations Manager at Causeway Health and Social Services Trust on 028 27661272.

Innovative Programmes and Ideas:

Mental health service users at East Sussex County Healthcare NHS Trust take on jobs while they are inpatients as part of their rehabilitation. Many jobs involve lifting, carrying, packing and sorting. The trust has designed two workbooks to help train the service users in keeping good posture while lifting and carrying. The workbooks are used by trainers on a one-to-one basis and include photos of service users demonstrating good and bad postures.

For further information, please contact Clif Penny, Head of Corporate Affairs and Planning at East Sussex County Healthcare NHS Trust on 01323 444132.

Joined Up Working Practices:

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust has an occupational therapy team comprising doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, an ergonomist and a moving and handling coordinator and trainers. The team assesses departments with high staff sickness from musculo-skeletal disorders and works with the department to solve problems. For instance, drug cabinets on wards have been moved next to beds instead of above them after several staff reported neck and shoulder pain because they had trouble reaching the cabinets.

For further information, please contact Jessamy Kinghorn at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust on 0121 507 5303.