



The Royal College of

Midwives England

Kings House 2nd Floor King Street Leeds LS1 2HH
T 0113 244 4310 F 0113 234 7940 **Website** www.rcm.org.uk

Rethinking Representation

The Royal College of Midwives welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this strand of the excellent work that has been undertaken at St. Georges under the auspices of the Midwifery Futures initiative.

Our General Secretary Cathy Warwick spoke at the event that was held on 26 March 2013 to launch St. George's Midwifery BME Network and was inspired by the enthusiasm and creativity that was showcased at that event by midwives.

Furthermore, as a Trade Union and Professional Organisation, we feel that by contributing to this work, we are combining those two aspects of our role and function and are particularly committed to working with the Trust to raise the profile of midwifery, influence service delivery and represent our members both individually and collectively.

Context

As a Trade Union the RCM has branches that are currently geographically based; the majority of our members at St. Georges belong to the South Thames Branch which includes members also deployed at Kings and Guys and St. Thomas' Hospital. Meetings rotate between the sites and the branch officials may be from any of the sites.

The RCM Stewards and Health and Safety Representatives are elected through the branches and are accredited by the RCM to carry out that role. Once accredited, the RCM notifies the Trust and that record should be held by the Trust.

The role of the workplace representative is key to both the RCM, Trust and members and therefore the training and development of our representatives is extremely important and we invest extensive resources into ensuring that our representatives understand the role and represent the organisation in a professional and well informed manner.(Role Description-attached)

Equally, all trade union representatives have a right to time off for union duties including training, and the employer gives representatives the time as part of the Recognition Agreement, which is drawn up by the two parties.

Once accredited, RCM representatives are eligible to attend bespoke training courses; some that are residential, as well as providing training days that are held regionally, on a three monthly basis. The RCM Regional Officer has a responsibility to develop representatives; offering support, advice and shadowing opportunities and acting as a role model and demonstrating leadership qualities.

General Secretary: Professor Cathy Warwick, CBE, DSc (Hon), MSc, PGCEA, ADM, RM, RN
President: Ms Liz Stephens MA, MSc, BSc (Hon), RM, RGN
Director: Jacque Gerrard MSc, RM, RGN
Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

The RCM is currently undertaking a Review of all workplace representative training and development, to ensure it is current, relevant, good value and fit for purpose. Furthermore, due to success of our I-learn and I-folio platform, consideration is being given to a more blended approach to learning.

Equality and Diversity

The RCM is committed to ensuring that the principles that underpin its Equality and Diversity Strategy are upheld, both internally and externally.

In addition to that, it is in an ideal position to influence implementation and promotion of equality issues in NHS Trusts, regionally and nationally.

Equality monitoring is also undertaken on representation of members, but currently on representation provided by RCM Officers only.

As a result of research undertaken by the RCM in relation to disciplinary processes and BME midwives, it is currently working with NHS England, London Region on a summit to highlight the relevant issues with key stakeholders from London Trusts that provide maternity services.

(RCM Equality and Diversity Strategy 2013 -2015 and RCM FOI Research Report November 2012 attached)

Partnership Working

The RCM is committed to working in partnership with other stakeholders, including other trade unions, managers and employers as it believes that whilst there may be a range of partnership models available, they are all based on building relationships and shared understanding of the matters being considered.

The level of partnership may vary, depending on the issue, but there are incremental steps to building trust and understanding in order to identify a shared interest in resolving situations on a mutually advantageous basis. The steps, broadly speaking are:

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Collaboration

This approach doesn't mean that the two parties will always agree, because they obviously have separate interests.

What it does mean is that the parties will work collaboratively, with respect, in adopting a solution –focussed approach.

There will be occasions where the respective parties cannot agree, but the relationship should be well enough developed to accept that, in the knowledge that all attempts at resolution have been exhausted.

The RCM would wish to work in this way with managers at St. Georges and this could be supported by joint training, workshops and working together on projects in the future, with the participation of our representatives, members, managers and others e.g. HR, Staff side etc.

Moving Forward

As part of its commitment to Rethinking Representation, the RCM believes that there are a number of ways that it can commit to improve the relationship and effectiveness of RCM representation in the Trust.

Below are some suggestions:

- Forming a workplace branch to increase ownership and effectiveness.
- Joint Training with representatives and managers to increase understanding and promote partnership philosophy.
- Election of an RCM Union Learning Representative to increase learning in the workplace
- Organise some events to promote the RCM- workshops, seminars, debates, social networking opportunities etc.

Commitment

The RCM is committed to working together with key stakeholders in the Trust, to improve relationships, increase understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and perceives this as a starting point on the journey.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to contribute to your initiative; we look forward to working with the Trust.

Pat Gould – RCM Regional Head – South

June 2013