Satisfaction with infection control on rise but staff feel ‘undervalued’

by Nick Lipley
The Healthcare Commission’s latest annual survey of NHS staff has revealed that satisfaction with how acute trusts manage infection control is growing.

But the findings, which were published last month, also show that staff increasingly think that they are undervalued by their employers.

The survey was undertaken between October and December last year, and involved almost 156,000 members of staff, more than half of all NHS acute sector employees in England.

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26 per cent of respondents thought that their trusts valued their work, down two percentage points from 2005. Survey responses also indicate that levels of communication between senior management and staff are poor, with only 22 per cent thinking that it is effective.

On the other hand, 71 per cent of respondents say that their immediate managers encourage teamwork and are supportive in personal crises, while 73 per cent said they take advantage of flexible working options and 94 per cent had taken part in training programmes.

Healthcare Commission chief executive Anna Walker said: ‘The results show that there are a lot of reasons to work in the NHS, including the satisfaction staff get from their jobs, the ability to work hours that suit them, through to real training opportunities on offer.

‘But there are challenges in making the NHS a better place to work. Staff in the NHS provide vital, often life-saving care. Yet they do not feel their work is valued by their trust while communication with senior management is poor. These are things that trusts can and must change.’

On infection control issues, she added: ‘At a time when public concern about healthcare associated infections is high, I’m pleased to see improvements in this area. But trusts must make sure that frontline staff always have the necessary equipment to wash their hands.

RCN general secretary Peter Carter said: ‘This wide-ranging report shows that, on the whole, staff feel the NHS is a good place to work with the majority reporting high levels of job satisfaction.’

› To access the Healthcare Commission report, go to www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/healthcareproviders/nationalfindings/surveys/healthcareproviders/surveysofnhsstaff2007.cfm

What staff say

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages of staff who agree with these statements</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trusts do enough to promote handwashing</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are trained in infection control</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection control is relevant to staff jobs</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwashing equipment is always available</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusts value the work done by staff</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
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Statistics on infection control show that 82 per cent of staff think that, in promoting handwashing among staff, their trusts do enough, up 12 percentage points from 2005 (see right). The Healthcare Commission highlights however that work must still be done to ensure that handwashing equipment is always available.

Although the survey results show that staff remain generally satisfied in their jobs, only

Boards launch MRSA screening programme


The boards are responsible for running the year-long MRSA screening programme for all hospital patients, backed by £7 million of new investment in 2008/09. If the screening programmes are successful, they will be introduced in every health board from 2009/10.

Structural change to NHS proposed

Health minister Edwina Hart has announced proposals for major changes to the NHS structure in Wales including:

› Abolition of the internal market by providing funding from the Welsh Assembly Government or from an NHS board for Wales directly to NHS trusts and local health boards (LHBs).

› Reduction in the number of LHBs from 22 to eight.

› Three options for establishing the NHS board: a special health authority, a civil service board or an advisory board supporting an NHS chief executive.

Ms Hart said: ‘This new simplified structure will provide further career opportunities for staff and give patients easier access to a wider range of health care professionals.’

› For copies of the proposals, which are out to consultation until June 25, access http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/currentconsultation/healthandsoccarecurrcons/nhsWales/index.html See also Have your say, page 35