RCN CLAIMS TRUST’S NEW CONTRACT PLANS WOULD MAKE IT THE WORST NHS EMPLOYER IN THE UK

Acute trust seeks to stop nurses’ sick pay

By Linda Steele

A WELSH acute trust wants to scrap sick pay for new nurses in a move which the RCN says could make it one of the worst NHS employers in the UK.

Morrison Hospital NHS Trust in Swansea has employed 11 grade D nurses on contracts which deny them sick pay and leave for professional training in their first year of employment. Clinical grading is replaced with three local salary bands. But the trust said these were early, ‘radical’ arrangements for staffing a new cardiac unit which are now being ‘modified’.

RCN regional officer David Wallace said: ‘It’s appalling and short-sighted. Imagine staff having to choose between losing pay or coming in to work with flu on a cardiac ward with vulnerable patients. Refusing staff additional training leave could be damaging to nurses needing to update their skills under PREP.

The conditions are markedly worse than neighbouring trusts’, and possibly the worst in Wales, if not the UK. In addition, the trust had refused to consult over the new terms and conditions, he claimed.

Acting trust chief executive Margaret Rees-Hughes said the nurses were now to be offered another local contract but with revised conditions, including annualised hours. The staff side had been consulted but had been ‘quoting inaccuracies’. The parents of the victims of nurse Beverly Allitt are to share compensation of £500,000, following an out of court settlement by Lincolnshire health authority. The payments will be made in recognition of the post traumatic stress disorder which the parents suffered. Ms Allitt was found guilty of murdering four children and injuring nine others.

By Linda Steele

DoH admits to flaws in breastfeeding drive

THE BABY Friendly Initiative (BFI), the worldwide project aimed at promoting breastfeeding, was set up in the UK on a ‘third world model of maternity services’, a leading government official said last week.

Cynthia Rickitt, the civil servant at the health department in charge of promoting the BFI, told the Health Visitors’ Association annual conference that the model was ‘inappropriate for the UK. She admitted shortcomings in the BFI project, but said that it was now ‘getting it right’.

However, one health visitor from Manchester reported the use of ‘bullying tactics, intimidation and threats’ by a local trust to make people breastfeed.

Ms Rickitt said intimidation and dogma have no place in persuading women to breastfeed, adding that women should be allowed an informed choice.

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Meningitis reassurance for students

NURSES GAVE ‘lots of reassurance’ as well as jabs to 800 Cardiff University students during an emergency inoculation programme after two meningitis deaths.

A Bro Taf health authority spokesperson said: ‘We were very lucky that nurses from University Hospital of Wales came down to help the other nurses. We could not have done it without them.’

RCN Welsh board secretary Anne Pegington said everyone was ‘very upset’ by the outbreak.

Managers at Monklands hospital, Airdrie, have called in ten extra nurses every day to cope with more than 200 E coli food poisoning cases.

‘We’ve had to call in staff on annual leave and some agency nurses. Others have called in offering help and to do extra shifts,’ said Frank Crossan, a senior nurse manager at the hospital. ‘I can’t praise them enough, they’ve been absolutely fantastic,’ he added.