



Press Release

5th November 2008

NHS staff 'speak out' about physical assaults

- Campaigns and culture change spark rise in reported assaults

Official figures released today by the NHS Security Management Service (SMS) show that there were 55,993 reported physical assaults against NHS staff in England 2007/8 – a rise of 284 from last year's figure of 55,709.

During the same period sanctions against people who commit assault have also risen to 992 – an increase of 123 on last year and a substantial rise from the 51 that were recorded in 2002/3.

Since its introduction in 2003, SMS, which oversees management of security in the National Health Service and conducts anti-violence campaigns, has made significant efforts to increase reporting of assaults.

This work has mainly been locally focused with Local Security Management Specialists (LSMSs) educating and encouraging staff to report all physical assaults – whether or not they cause injury. SMS believes the rise in reported assaults is directly linked to the efforts of the 90% of Trusts which now have a nominated LSMS.

Managing Director of the NHS CFSMS, Dermid McCausland, said: "We firmly believe this rise demonstrates a shift in culture among staff who are saying they will not accept violence as part of the job and are demonstrating this by reporting rather than an actual increase in assaults. Local Security Management Specialists (LSMSs) working with their Trusts are actively encouraging staff to report."

Head of the SMS, Richard Hampton, said "For too long NHS staff have been prepared to accept some level of violence or abuse as a part of the job. The SMS has made educating staff about the importance of reporting all assaults a top priority because nothing can be done unless they are reported. This increase is a flag that shows people are now confident that action will be taken.

"It is important that the risks of violence to staff are properly assessed so that the right measures are taken to prevent violence wherever possible and to prosecute offenders when they regrettably do occur."

More/.....

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NHS staff 'speak out' about physical assaults/2....

The figures come at the start of the SMS's third annual Security Awareness Month Security (SAM) – an England-wide campaign which runs through November. It is designed to increase awareness amongst NHS employees of who their LSMS is and what they do. It also acts to motivate employees to report assaults and protect themselves against attack.

LSMS Will Smith who manages security at Dorset PCT said: "My work, not just during SAM, but throughout the year has had a positive effect on NHS staff. We are now getting staff reporting more **incidents** and more accurately. I know this is a direct result of the support I can offer and the improved reporting systems we as a Trust have put in place.

"The appointment of a LSMS has meant that for the first time, staff do have a specific contact point to report security incidents. Our role is to encourage reporting and support staff. In serious cases I get the police involved and support staff through the criminal justice system. In minor cases we look at how we could improve the work environment so that the same thing cannot happen again. We strongly believe that our staff need to work in a safer and secure environment so that they can deliver the highest standards of clinical care to their patients."

Despite the progress with improved reporting of assaults, this is just one piece of the puzzle. In the long-term initiatives such as Conflict Resolution Training (CRT) and the implementation of robust policies and procedures are also critical.

Alastair Henderson, NHS Employers joint acting director, said: "NHS staff should be able to come to work and to carry out their duties without fear of violence. This rise in figures is linked to the fact that most trusts now have a nominated Local Security Management Specialist and we wholeheartedly support the NHS Security Management Service (SMS) in the excellent work they have been doing to ensure incidents are reported. Employers take any attacks on their staff very seriously and pursue prosecutions wherever possible."

-ENDS-

For more information contact Liz Justice at the NHS CFS press office on 020 7895 4524. Further information on the NHS CFSMS can be found at www.cfsms.nhs.uk

Notes to editors

1. The NHS Security Management Service (SMS) is part of the NHS Counter Fraud and Security Management Service (NHS CFSMS), which is a division of the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA).
2. The SMS was set up in 2003 to handle policy and operational matters related to the management of security within the NHS. It strives to ensure real and permanent improvements are made to provide the best protection for NHS staff and property.
3. In April 2004, the SMS developed a national syllabus for conflict resolution training aimed at all frontline NHS staff. This training gives staff the skills to recognise and defuse potentially violent situations. Figures show that more than **428,000** staff have been trained so far.
4. The SMS has developed a range of policy and guidance for health bodies aimed at making the NHS safer.
5. Local Security Management Specialists (LSMSs) are in place in health bodies around England to investigate security breaches, along with the police, and implement new systems to better protect NHS staff and property. All reported incidents of violence against staff are reported to the LSMS as well as the police. They receive professional training in areas such as witness interviewing and a background in law, and are supported nationally by the SMS.

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