

THE NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

VIOLENCE AGAINST STAFF

Official figures released on 5th November 2008 by the NHS Security Management Service (NHS SMS) show that there were 55,993 reported physical assaults on 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 1,001 – an increase of 132 on last year and a substantial rise from the 51 were recorded in 2002/3.

Since its introduction in 2003, NHS Security Management Service (NHS 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 been largely locally focused with Local Security Management Specialists (LSMSs) educating and encouraging staff to report all physical assaults – whether or not they cause injury. NHS SMS believes the rise in reported assaults is directly linked to the efforts of the LSMSs who are now in place in 90% of Trusts in England.

Head of Security at NHS SMS, Richard Hampton, 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.

"For too long NHS staff have been prepared to accept some level of violence or abuse as a part of the job. The NHS Security Management Service has made educating staff about the importance of reporting all assaults a top priority because nothing can be done unless they're 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."

The figures come at the start of the NHS 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.

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.

A breakdown of the figures by Trust is attached.

Notes

1. The NHS Security Management Service (NHS 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.
2. Figures show there were 55,993 reported physical assaults on NHS staff in England 2007/8 – a rise of 284 from last year's figure of 55,709. By sector the figures are:
 1. 1,465 reported assaults against Ambulance staff – **up 459**
 2. 10,983 reported assaults against staff in acute/foundation Trusts – **up 1,298**
 3. 3,607 reported assaults against staff in PCTs – **up 162**
 4. 39,934 reported assaults against staff in Mental Health/learning disability settings – **down 1,635**
3. In April 2004, the NHS 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 NHS 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 NHS SMS.