



UNISON HEALTHCARE - BRANCH UPDATE

From: Christina McAnea, UNISON National Secretary - Health

BRIEFING HC-115-14

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Developments in Decontamination/Sterile Services

Who needs to know?

- **UK Health Branches**

Summary:

UNISON, NHS Employers and the Institute of Decontamination Sciences have been working collaboratively to raise national standards and training for staff working in Sterile Services roles.

In full:

Recently, UNISON, NHS Employers the Institute of Decontamination Sciences (IDSc) have been working together to review the national profiles for Sterile Services bands 1 – 3. With Health Care Acquired Infections (HCAIs) a serious concern for NHS Trusts, the role of the Sterile Services Department needs consistency in both training and skill levels for staff to ensure robust measures are in place to reduce risks to patients.

IDSc have long argued for a consistent training and education pathway for staff with a focus on Bands 1 – 4 which is now a reality thanks to their partner education provider, Anglia Ruskin University <http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/prospectus/ugft/decomsci.html> and inclusion of the course on the Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC) programme.

In 2013, the Job Evaluation Group (JEG) reviewed the Sterile Services National Profiles and agreed that a more relevant set of national profiles to match against were the Healthcare Science National Profiles available through NHS Employers http://www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Documents/Pay%20and%20reward/Healthcare_Science_Generic.pdf. A note has been added to these profiles to recommend them to matching panels and, although the sterile services profiles are still available http://www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Documents/Pay%20and%20reward/Sterile_services.pdf, they are considered to be less relevant

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given the increase in knowledge, training and skills that Sterile Services staff have taken on and the limitation of maximum band 3 in the sterile services profiles.

In another recent development, the IDSc have written a set of Job Descriptions (JDs) in a move to achieve a greater consistency across the UK decontamination/sterile services departments. These new job descriptions are available through their website <http://www.idsc-uk.co.uk/education.php> and have been promoted through Trust networks and the HR community for use in Sterile Services, Medical Device Decontamination, Endoscopy and Dental Service departments.

Please remember that job descriptions need to be agreed by the member of staff (or their representatives) through consultation and may lead to a request for a job evaluation to take place. It is unlikely that the new job descriptions would lead to a downbanding as the new JDs contain more up to date and information on the main factors involving Knowledge, Skills and Training in line with the more professional nature of current education pathways.

Where decontamination services have been outsourced to private providers, there may be some resistance to requests for updating of Job Descriptions and banding reviews. However, it should be remembered that the guidelines and standards set by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are clear on the requirements for employers and providers of decontamination services.

Actions for branches:

- Make this health circular available to UNISON reps and members working in Decontamination and Sterile Services, Endoscopy, Dental and Medical Device Decontamination
- Inform your Trust/Health Authority Job Evaluation leads
- Ask for staff side leads to review the information in the IDSc Job Descriptions against existing JDs
- If supported by members in these areas, raise at your Joint Negotiating forum
- Discuss the IDSc Technical Certificate and the Foundation/Graduate (FDS/BSc) available from Anglia Ruskin with employers as this is locally funded by employers

Author:
Alan Lofthouse

Email:
a.lofthouse@unison.co.uk

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