

Royal College of Nursing Resource Centres opens in York

Vickie Orton, RCN Library Projects Co-ordinator

The Royal College of Nursing working in partnership with The Retreat in York have just opened a new RCN resource centre. The centre which was officially opened by Cris Allen, mental health adviser for the RCN, offers access to a comprehensive range of journals; provides free use of the internet, including access to British Nursing Index Plus database & electronic journals; reference use of the library and access to RCN publications and Nursing Update videos. The RCN centre is located in the hospital resource centre and is open to all RCN members and Retreat staff.

The RCN recognises that many mental health nurses can experience difficulties in accessing specialist information resources and it is anticipated that RCN resource centres will help plug gaps in information provision. The centre is one in a growing number of RCN resource centres, which are located across the UK. As part of the work that the RCN undertook when developing its Information Strategy many members commented that they would like easier access to information services. As a result a number of new information services have been including resource centres and electronic services.

The aim of the resource centres is to plug gaps in information provision by working with information providers and other organisations rather than duplicating existing services. Three types of resource centre have been developed:

- Learning resource centre: set up in partnership with other information providers usually in NHS Trusts or FE Colleges. Services offered include use of library facilities (reference only for non-staff/students), RCN Nursing Update videos, free Internet access, RCN publications.
- Information point: set up in partnership with nursing agencies, independent sector hospitals and sites where there are no library facilities. Services offered include free internet access (including access to BNI Plus for RCN members), small journal collection, RCN Nursing Update videos, RCN publications
- Kiosk: set up in nursing homes and GP surgeries to provide a quick reference facility.

The type of resource centre developed reflects local need and circumstance. Many resource centres are developed to meet the needs of a particular field of practice e.g. mental health, learning disabilities, health care of older people.

All are set up and operate on a partnership basis with resources and support being provided by the RCN and the partner organisation. The resource centre is open to all staff working within that organisation and all local RCN members. They are of particular value to nurses working in the independent sector but are well used by nurses and health care assistants across the spectrum.

Many RCN members stated that they had difficulty accessing information resources either due to the nature of their place of employment (e.g. the independent sector) or due to geography (e.g. those nurses working in rural areas). The first resource centres were set up to meet these needs but it soon became apparent that nurses working in urban areas faced similar problems and so the development spread. In addition to providing information services several resource centres also became a venue for training. Courses were run on topics suggested by the users

and aimed at all nurses working in the locality regardless of their place of work.

Resource centres are set up by RCN members and operate on a self-service basis. They aim to provide local access to information to meet individual information and lifelong learning needs. Other mental health resource centres can be found at Rampton hospital near Retford, Mental Health Services of Salford in Prestwich, and Carleton Clinic in Carlisle; a specialist resource centre aimed at those working in the field of learning disabilities has been opened in partnership with Hensol Hospital in Pontyclun. There are a number of general resource centres which can be found across the UK on hospital sites, in nursing homes, nursing agencies.

In addition to the physical resource centres two web-based resources are being developed. The first is the expansion of the Libraries for Nurse's website, which will allow nurses to identify their nearest nursing library and the facilities on offer. The second is a knowledge portal for mental health nurses. This aims to provide a discussion forum, access to good practice and links to relevant information for mental health workers.

If you would like details of where your nearest resource centre is or would like an information pack on setting up your own resource centre then contact Vickie Orton, RCN Library Projects Co-ordinator on 0113 245 1413 or email vickie.orton@rcn.org.uk