Welsh Assembly Government secondment

Angela Perrett
Library and Information Services Manager
Royal College of Nursing Wales
Ty Maeth
King George V Drive East
Cardiff CF14 2JQ
e-mail angela.perrett@rcn.org.uk

In April 2002 I moved from my post of Library and Information Services Manager at the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Wales to take up a 3 year secondment with the Welsh Assembly Government in the Health Information Department. My original role was as project co-ordinator for the EDICT (Education and Development in Information and Communications Technology) Programme.

The Programme included:

- Basic computer skills for all NHS Wales staff. The recommended qualification being the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL): http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites/page.cfm?orgid=367&pid=2830

- Health informatics skills for all clinicians, using the Learning to Manage Health Information (LTMHI) framework: http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites/page.cfm?orgid=367&pid=2831

- Professionalism of health informatics staff

Health informatics may be an unfamiliar term for some. Here are 2 standard definitions:

> - ...the term used to describe the science of information management in health care and its application to support clinical research, decision making and practice
> (Learning to Manage Health Information, 1999)

> *... the knowledge, skills and tools which enable information to be collected, managed, used and shared to support the delivery of healthcare and promote health*
>
> (UK Council for Health Informatics Professionals (UKCHIP), 2002)

One of my major contributions to the Programme was the implementation of ECDL. This included:

- The central procurement of ECDL logbooks for NHS staff
- The establishment of centrally funded NHS accredited test centres set up, centrally funded in every Trust and Business Service Centre
- Training for NHS Test Centre staff
- Publishing ECDL pages on the Health of Wales Information Service (HOWIS -NHS Wales' intranet), including Welsh directories
- To initiate the central procurement of online training and testing software. This will be available for all NHS staff next month.

The implementation of both ECDL and LTMHI required the development of Learning Needs Analysis tools to assess both individual and organisational needs.

Under the professionalism of health informatics staff area, the following groups of staff were included:

- Health records staff
- Library staff
- Health information management staff, including clinical coders
- Senior information managers and directors of information services
- ICT staff
- Clinical informatics staff, including nurses

The professionalism theme included:

- CPD programmes for:

- o   Library staff
- o   Health records staff
- o   Health information managers
- Welsh input to the National Occupational Standards Project, including running workshops throughout Wales. This project will feed into the Agenda for Change Knowledge and Skills Framework
- Contributing to the establishment of a UK registration body (UKCHIP)

Due to my professional library background I also became involvement in some strategic library projects e.g. the procurement of electronic journals for NHS Wales; the evaluation of national knowledge databases and copyright training for NHS library staff.

During my secondment I also undertook PRINCE2 project management training and gained the registered practitioner qualification. PRINCE is a structured approach for controlling and organising projects. This approach clarifies your thinking and makes you concentrate on outcomes and aims rather than activities. It is one of the key skills I am now keen to use at the RCN.

The EDICT Programme has now been absorbed into the Welsh NHS modernisation strategy *Informing Healthcare*:
http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites/home.cfm?OrgID=365

For me personally this would have meant relocation to Bridgend and having to move to a permanent position. Even though I really enjoyed the work programme it was never my intention to leave the RCN permanently so I returned to my post a year early.

On my return to the RCN management were very open to the incorporation of new skills into my previous role and to new developments I wished to implement. Without this flexibility I think it would have been very difficult to return to my

previous role. I now work closely with the RCN's informatics advisor and we, with June Clark, are currently organising a conference, for nurses on informatics, with the intention of encouraging nurses to get engaged with the nursing/healthcare informatics agenda and to push nursing informatics onto the Welsh political top table. I also have my library assistant, Rhydian Williams, to thank for this, as he has taken on much of the responsibility for day-to-day library services.

After 2 years away from the RCN there were many new initiatives to get to grips with e.g. the development of the RCN's Learning Zone, an online journals service and a new appraisal system. With hindsight it would have been a good idea to have regarded myself as a new member of staff and undergone a formal induction.

At my original interview I was asked by Jackie Barker, my subsequent line manager, how I would cope with negative comments that would immediately be hurled at anyone who announced that they worked for the government. To give Jackie her due, she didn't laugh when I said I thought that was unlikely to happen. Over the last 2 years some of the things I have found myself being criticised for include: house prices in Aberystwyth, the state of the trains and Rhodri Morgan's haircut!

The secondment has given me a wider and more strategic perspective. This includes how library and information services are perceived and valued, which can often be uncomfortable knowledge, but still worth knowing, in order to improve the promotion and marketing of our services. I also now have greater knowledge of government and national strategies, which will help in the RCN's lobbying role. I highly recommend any opportunities library staff can take of playing a wider role. This will help to future-proof both individual careers and the profession overall.