

## RIXG IT Advocates Survey

### Informatics Staff

#### Regions surveyed (October 2008):

East of England  
North East

South Central  
Yorkshire & Humber

In addition: Scotland

**No. of Units covered:** 19

#### Main Themes:

For the vast majority of units the principal issues related to a lack of formal structure with respect to renal informatics staff. There was a wide degree of variation from unit to unit. Example information:

Parameter			
Professional background of informatics staff	8 – formal IT	9 – non-IT	2 (commercial companies)
Are staff funded by the renal unit?	16 – yes	1 – Trust IT	2 indirectly via commercial companies
Salary band of staff	Agenda for Change bands 3 – 8a		
Is there formal provision for leave cover?	4 – yes	13 – no	2 (commercial companies)
Is there formal provision for staff development?	8 – yes	9 – informal	2 (commercial companies)
Is there any formal succession planning?	3 – variable	14 – none	2 (commercial companies)

#### Trust / Hospital Support:

In general Trust IT departments are seen to be supportive but more often in ‘moral’ terms rather than actual provision of service.

Managerial support was not always forthcoming. At least two units had been left for a number of years without any direct funds allocated within their budget for IT related work with a consequent decline in the quality of data collected. Poor performance as indicated in UK Registry returns has helped one unit to secure funding for proper IT infrastructure.

In almost all of the units surveyed, progress in the renal informatics area has been critically dependent upon the presence and energy of motivated clinicians (often with little IT expertise) to drive this forward.

## **Comments:**

Concerns were expressed by many units regarding the lack of robustness of the informatics infrastructure whether it be related to: (i) poor funding / difficulty in banding posts under Agenda for Change; (ii) lack of leave cover; (iii) provision of staff development; (iv) provision of succession planning. These concerns are all the more relevant with the recent introduction of the National Renal Dataset (in England) and the legal obligation to collect the data items therein.

## **Outcome to date (May 2009):**

Kate Harris (South Central Advocate) and Cherry Bartlett (RIXG member) have undertaken a more detailed survey of renal unit informatics staff since the original Advocate survey. At the last RIXG meeting in March 2009 they reported interim findings from 21 survey responses received to date. They too noted the very striking variations in the range of responsibilities and resources, as well as in the grading of staff.

An interim report is to be made available to inform the BRS Workforce Planning Meeting on 23rd March. Nicki Thomas (RIXG member and BRS representative) will speak on behalf of the informatics issue at that meeting.

Donal O' Donaghue (National Clinical Director for Kidney Services) is to pass the same document into the DH Workforce Review Team process.

A final version of this report will be reported on at the next RIXG meeting in June 2009.

Dr Afzal Chaudhry  
East of England Advocate  
May 2009