

Press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday 8 March 2010

Lincolnshire's hospitals helping to protect staff who work alone

Hospital staff who work on their own are being given increased protection wherever they are.

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust is distributing new personal security alarms to all staff who are lone workers, in a bid to protect them from violence and aggression and improve their safety.

The alarms can be used to monitor and record incidents where staff feel their safety is threatened, as well as calling for assistance.

Local Security Management Specialist for ULHT, Lance Morgan, said:
"The new system provides staff who have to work on their own at all hours with a service that they can use to signal discreetly for assistance should they feel vulnerable or intimidated.

"It helps protect our staff from violence or abuse and allows us to take legal action against those who abuse or assault our staff," he said.

"Positive feedback has been given by the 100 staff we have trained so far, they have all found it very useful as it gives them the added protection and support that they need. If the system proves successful we will roll out the devices to more staff."

The staff groups who are receiving the alarms include maternity and childrens nurses.

More information about security for NHS staff can be found at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/security

E N D S

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Notes to editors

The distribution of the alarms is part of a Government scheme, after the Department of Health announced in May 2009 that 30,000 NHS lone workers would receive personal security alarms.

Lone working is defined as any situation or location in which someone works without a colleague nearby; or when someone is working out of sight or earshot of another colleague. This could be outside of a hospital or similar environment or internally, where staff care for patients or service users on their own. Other descriptions commonly used include community or outreach workers. Lone working may be a constituent part of a person's usual job or it could occur on an infrequent basis, as and when circumstances dictate. Lone working is not unique to any particular groups of staff, working environment or time of day.

Health bodies have a responsibility to protect their staff from incidents of violence, threatening behaviour and verbal abuse. Staff can now use these devices to monitor and record incidents where they feel their safety is threatened. Evidence, including audio recordings obtained through these devices, may be used in criminal and civil proceedings and/or to take local sanctions against alleged offenders. The health bodies are responsible for the use of the devices and any recordings. They will of course continue to take any necessary steps to safeguard patient confidentiality, and recordings will only be retained where incidents have occurred.

The NHS Security Management Service (NHS SMS) – a division of the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) - was set up in 2003 to handle policy and operational matters related to the management of security within the NHS in England. It strives to ensure permanent improvements are made to provide the best protection for NHS staff and property.

In 2008/09 there were 143 reported instances of staff of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust being assaulted at work.

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.