



Radiographers and Volunteering - SOR policy and guidance

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Summary

SCoR publishes this second edition of this guidance to advise members and Managers about engaging staff as volunteers. The main reason for considering a voluntary commitment is typically to support newly qualified radiographers who cannot find immediate employment. There have also been requests from radiographers who want to return to clinical practice and are required to improve their knowledge and level of understanding of the work

Overview

1. The Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) has, in recent months, been asked to advise members and Managers about engaging staff as volunteers. The main reason for considering a voluntary commitment is typically to support newly qualified radiographers who cannot find immediate employment. There have also been requests from radiographers who want to return to clinical practice and are required to improve their knowledge and level of understanding of the work. [NB. We have included separate guidance at the end of this briefing which relates to this section of the workforce.]
2. We are unclear at this time if the current level of enquiry is short term or will increase as the NHS cuts back on employment and development in order to balance the books.
3. Nevertheless we feel that it is important that employers and members are fully aware of SoR policy and advice on this issue to avoid conflict and confusion.

SoR Position

1. The SoR is clearly of the view that if there is work for radiographers it should be done by staff under formal contract and that it is not acceptable for employers to coerce any member into working voluntarily to save money or to fill posts that would otherwise be advertised.
2. The purpose of a system of volunteering must be to assist the volunteer to find work and not to support the work in the diagnostic imaging or radiotherapy department.

If the diagnostic imaging or radiotherapy department has no current vacancies or any openings for bank staff, then accepting volunteers in the department can be considered a viable option for encouraging new recruits for the future.

Guidance

The following should be considered and agreed with staff before volunteers are engaged;

- The manager should discuss the introduction of volunteering with the SoR departmental representative and staff to avoid confusion and disagreement and issue a briefing to all staff that will explain the reasons why it is necessary to consider volunteering in the department. The briefing will also confirm that there are currently no vacancies in the department. Where there are vacancies there must be a commitment from the employer that any volunteer will not undermine attempts to make a substantive appointment.
- Before considering volunteers in the unit the employer should review the system of employing staff on short term contracts to fill vacant posts for long term sickness and maternity cover to ensure that any system to engage volunteers is not in conflict with current practice.
- Newly qualified radiographers may consider volunteering to maintain and/or develop their competences necessary to retain registration with the Health Professions Council (HPC) when there are no formal contracts on offer. This benefits the employer and the member and means that they are well placed should a post or bank opportunity arise. Any system of work to introduce volunteers should be agreed with staff and reviewed every 6 months.
- The volunteer should be fully aware of their level of responsibility in the department and any scheme of work will be agreed with them and known to staff before they attend the unit
- All volunteers will need CRB and health clearance. Volunteers should only be engaged for limited periods and agreed with staff and when there is sufficient staff and flexibility to instruct and provide clinical support
- All volunteers will be clearly identified to staff and should be considered supernumerary to the established staffing level
- The SoR recommends that a system of work is agreed for volunteers and that wherever possible an honorary contract is used
- Although volunteers are not considered as employees for the purposes of discrimination laws such as the DDA, for example. Employers should ensure that volunteers are made aware of their obligations towards equality as set out in local policy.

Volunteers and the SOR insurance for Professional Indemnity

The SoR insurance cover is designed to support members in paid employment or engaged under contract. Any members who are engaged as volunteers and are not on an honorary contract and are not under instruction or do not have an agreed scheme of work will not benefit from cover.

Returners to the profession

With the downturn in the economy there is likely to be an increase in the number of members who having left the profession some time ago may now wish to return to practice. Whilst the principles described above will need to be maintained there are specific requirements for members who wish to return to the profession.

- Anyone wishing to return will need to be under the direct supervision of a suitably qualified member of staff who has the skill and the clinical experience to undertake this task

- Employers who undertake this task may want to consider identifying key staff to undertake the role of mentor and provide suitable instruction in the role
- Returners should be aware of the limits of their role in the department and the level of skill they need to attain in order to meet the minimum requirements of HPC re-registration
- There should be a system of in house review and assessment of the returner to ensure that they are able and confident to complete tasks
- Any system of supervision or instruction should be to benefit the returner and not allow them to be used as an additional member of staff

Returners and the SOR indemnity scheme

Returners are not deemed to be employees and therefore during their period of assessment they are not covered by the SoR scheme as the principle liability for their actions rests with the supervising radiographer. For this reason it is advised that there is one named person who has overall clinical responsibility for the returner programme. As long as the employer has agreed to the scheme to support returners any further liability will fall on the employer.

Checklist

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