

Management briefing

Sincerely forward into the 1990s – a message from your District Chairperson

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The 1980s have been a productive decade for the aptly re-named MHS (Managerial Health Services) nationally and locally. And here at District X, 1989 saw us exceed national norms for most of the usual indices of managerial activity, including bulletins and minutes at a staggering 6.2 metric equivalents per person per year of service.

We have also seen a healthy expansion of staff in low-cost, low-productivity areas such as personnel, staff development and other Management Support Services. Our new Appointments System is a great success and we have finally abolished the Waiting List: new Managers are appointed as soon as a vacancy occurs.

Our broader responsibilities have not been neglected. The British Institute of Language Generation has been supported this year as always and continues its fine job of developing a language fit for Managers. Some of the 1989 front-runners will give you an idea of the calibre of their work: teambrief; greenfield site; new build; annual overspend; back-burner, as in to put or place on the b-; flag, as in to f- up. Meet up with and take on board are also doing nicely. Problem-situation has fallen behind in recent months and will need some additional fore-grounding. Also running into difficulties is virement, one of the Institute's more ambitious projects. It dates back to a discussion document from Region on the pros and cons of reintroducing Anglo-Norman as an official language.

Environmental issues have been prioritised and good work in re-cycling initiated under the code-name Cook-Chill. In the field of Informatics, pilot studies have already shown that managerial bulletins can be recycled at eight-monthly intervals without significant loss of information.

Let us now turn to the para-Managerial services. Here matters are not so happy. We have seen the blame for the current overspend placed squarely where it belongs, on the medical and nursing staff, and to a lesser extent on art therapy. There has been a failure to establish the right priorities in these areas and a lot of sentimental rubbish has been spouted about the needs of patients. Needs of patients, indeed! I never did like that phrase much anyway, with its overtones of sanctimonious professionalism. For needs of patients read needs of staff, equals pay-rises!

Still, there is no problem which will not yield to Managerial re-formulation. It did not take long for front-line Management to grasp the essentials and issue a thirty page consultation document in smudgy print. It was such a shame that someone added Social Services to the circulation list and put everything back by two years.

So how does it all look now? Basically, the issue to be accessed is the New Long Stay and the LTPD problem. Bottomlining on this one, NLS are staff who have spent more than two years in the same post. The Long Term Professionally Disabled are more of a problem. They exhibit what is technically known as "challenging behaviour" and sometimes *disagree* with Management.

We have taken a constructive and upfront negotiating stance towards this problem-situation. By this I mean that we have sacked a few of the buggers and down-graded the rest. But I jest! That was the Regional Strategy, which we reluctantly back-grounded on the basis that it lacked finesse.

We introduced multi-stage staff re-grading instead. This was, of course, incomprehensible and gave the Moaning Minnies something harmless to complain about.

Did I hear someone say, "and what about the art therapy overspend?" Excellent! Good Management is built on an eye for detail. Art therapy will shortly be transferred to the Works Department. Incidentally, we're indebted to the Occupational Therapy Department for that suggestion, which wins them this year's coveted Best Under-Managerial Money-Saver Award.

The second BUMMS Award goes to Hotel Services for BURP, a simple but powerful scheme which has attracted national interest. BURP, or the Blanket and Underwear Retrieval Project, has enabled a team of managers working undercover to remove an increasing proportion of blankets and knickers from the hospital pool. Resale, plus savings on the laundry bill, have turned this project into a steady little earner. The punters are also learning to make do with less, and let's not lose sight of the fact that this is what it's all about. Well done, team, and I say "Knickers!" to the Community Health Council.

Finally, to those who are concerned that we haven't had a new Close The Local Bin At All Costs, We'll Settle For Any Time In The Next Ten Years,

Just Shut The Bloody Place Down Masterplan from Region for some weeks: Take heart! Medical audit and cost-effectiveness studies may lack the raw excitement of a hospital closure, but, believe me, the opportunities they create for the alert Health Service Manager are limitless. Confidentially, I can tell you that we are already in sight of our 1992 target of one

manager per bed, so those undignified scrambles at siesta time will soon be a thing of the past.

Colleagues, let us march sincerely forward into a new era, when managerial knowhow and administrative skill will finally banish chronic illness and suffering from the presciently named Health Service.

Caption Competition

Readers are invited to use their skill and judgement to provide appropriate dialogue for the picture below. Three prizes of books from the Gaskell Press will be awarded to the winners. Completed entries should be forwarded to Elaine Millen at the *Psychiatric Bulletin* by the end of June.



Dr Jim Birley, President, Royal College of Psychiatrists, in conversation with Mr Kenneth Clark, Health Secretary.