

Facilities Agreement

Time-off and facilities for RCN Trade Union Representatives

To ensure effective partnership working, it is agreed RCN representatives will be provided with facilities and time off to undertake training and fulfil agreed functions.

Time Off

The employer agrees to allow each accredited representative or official to have paid time off during normal working hours.

No accredited representative or official shall suffer any loss of remuneration as a consequence of carrying out their duties in accordance with this agreement. Time-off with pay shall be calculated as if the person had worked during the period when the time-off was taken.

Before taking time-off, the representative or official will first seek permission from the departmental manager and provide general reasons for the request, the intended location and the expected period of absence. Representatives will provide appropriate notice to enable the manager to cover the representative's work, and always have in mind the demands of the service. However, permission for taking time-off will not be withheld unreasonably.

The employer recognises that union meetings may be held during working hours and that meetings which involve staff members in organisational development and change can motivate staff and benefit the organisation. Where the RCN proposes to hold a meeting of members during normal working hours, the RCN representative concerned shall notify the appropriate managers and shall agree the arrangements with the employer, including time and location of the meeting.

Facilities

The employer will make available to accredited representatives and officials, for the purpose of carrying out their agreed functions, the following facilities:

- The use in privacy of an official telephone.
- The provision and the use of notice boards on the employer's premises and internal IT system for both employment relations and educational purposes, promoting the range of RCN learning initiatives that are relevant to the area of practice
- Facilities for representatives or officials to interview individual members in privacy
- Facilities for meetings between RCN members and representatives and facilities for educational activities, including facilities to organise seminars, workshops and study days in collaboration with management and RCN staff
- Facilities for meetings with full-time officials of the RCN
- Appropriately sized office and storage space
- The use of typing, IT and reprographic facilities for employment relations, training and educational work, providing this does not interfere with the employer's work and provided that representatives use the facilities as economically as possible.
- The use of the employer's internal post and email system
- Access to departmental or senior management to make representation on behalf of the RCN or members

Training

The RCN will ensure that their representatives are appropriately briefed and trained in their duties. The employer will assist the RCN in this by allowing reasonable paid time-off for all elected representatives to take part in relevant training activities.

The employer and the RCN agree to the principles below, taken from the ACAS "*Code of Practice Time Off for Trade Union Duties and Activities*"¹.

- To carry out their duties effectively, officials need to possess skills and knowledge. In addition to the practical experience obtained from holding office, officials should undertake training in relevant subjects where necessary.
- Training should be relevant to the employment relations or professional nursing/educational matters. The official may be named as 'steward' in respect of

¹ <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2391>

employment relations matters, 'safety representative' in respect of health, safety and welfare of employees, and 'learning representatives' in respect of professional, nursing and education development.

- An employment representative's duties will vary according to the collective bargaining arrangements at the place of work, the structure of the unions and the role of the official. The learning representative's duties will also vary according to the locally determined requirement for professional/educational support and the educational/professional interests of the nursing care staff employed. Accordingly, there is no universally applicable syllabus for training.
- An official who has duties concerned with employment relations or professional nursing/education matters should be permitted to take reasonable paid time off work for the initial basic training and such training should be arranged as soon as possible after the official is elected or appointed.
- An official should be permitted to take reasonable paid time-off work for further training relevant to the carrying out of his or her duties concerned with employment relations or professional nursing /educational matters.
- Such training will be necessary to keep pace with change on many fronts, for example, professional learning duties, pay negotiation, patient care issues and legislation affecting employment relations.
- Safety reps will be permitted to take as much paid time off work as is necessary to undertake training and duties concerned with health, safety and welfare.

The RCN will inform the management if it has identified a need for basic or further training and wishes an officer to receive training. Details of the training, including a copy of the syllabus or prospectus that indicates the contents of the training course or programme will be provided if required.

The number of officials receiving training from any one place of employment at any one time will be reasonable, bearing in mind such factors as the operational requirements of the employer and the availability of relevant courses. The RCN should normally give at least a few weeks' notice of the nominations for training.

The RCN and management should always endeavour to reach agreement on the appropriate numbers and arrangements for representatives. If any problems do arise they should be solved through the relevant procedures.

Review and variation of facilities will be agreed between the RCN and employer.
