New Branches

The Country or Regional Representative and the Development or Fellowship Officer will identify areas where there is potential for a new branch to be opened. A new branch may be set up in an area where there is no existing branch or may be set up in parallel to an existing branch to meet a different membership style. The representative and the development / fellowship officer will decide the most appropriate mechanism for launching a new branch and the action needing to be taken, and any process described is only one of many that can be undertaken. The initial approach to the local NHS should be to the Chief Executive, and/or the Director of Human Resources / Workforce Director or through a known senior manager with a view to obtaining the organisation's initial and ongoing support for the branch. The Director of Human Resources / Workforce Director may know a staff member who is coming up to retirement who may be interested in helping to set up the branch and who would provide local knowledge.

Arranging the First Meeting

Once a venue and date have been agreed for an initial meeting, invitation letters to staff who have recently retired and staff who are coming up for retirement can be provided by the development officer / fellowship officer, for the local NHS to address and send out. A reply slip with the officer's name, address and email will give an indication of numbers attending and will provide names of individuals who are interested in the Fellowship but who are unable to attend the first meeting. The local NHS can be asked to publicise the meeting in the local press and free newspapers and on their intranet. Posters can be distributed in the hospitals, local health centres and GP surgeries. Invitations can be given out at pre-retirement courses. It is useful to give the website address on all publicity so that staff, with no prior knowledge, can learn about the Fellowship.

The objective of the first meeting will be to introduce the NHS RF and to recruit a steering group to set up the branch and plan some initial meetings. It may be possible to invite representatives from a nearby successful branch to answer questions and describe their own branch activities.

Setting up the Branch

A member of the steering group should seek agreement from the local NHS about a meeting venue, administration assistance, (stationery, postage etc.) photocopying, financial support and refreshments. Most NHS Authorities have endowment or trust funds for this purpose. If no hospital or community venue is suitable, the local NHS can be asked to pay the cost of a local meeting room. The branch will find it valuable to have a senior manager appointed from within the local NHS as a liaison person to set up ongoing two way communication between branch officers and senior managers within the local NHS. Many branches invite the Chairman and Chief Executive to a yearly meeting.

The structure of a branch and other guidance and information is available from the website or from Central Office. A branch constitution should be drawn up from the template branch constitution, rules of procedures available from the website or from Central Office. When this is agreed by the branch executive committee, it should be sent to the Chief Executive of the Fellowship for confirmation that it complies with Charity Commission and Fellowship requirements and a copy will be held at Central Office..

One of the first tasks of a new branch is to decide upon its title, and a priority is to open a bank/building society account with appropriate arrangements agreed for cheque signing. There should be two signatories on any cheque and branches should have at least three

persons who are authorised signatories. The Fellowship provides a “start-up” grant of £250 to all new branches. Useful information is available in the leaflet “Setting up a new branch” available from the website or from Central Office

Planning for the future

An on-going priority for the branch will be to recruit new members. The human resources department of local NHS and social care authorities can be asked to give out information about the Fellowship and the branch to retirees and they can enable branch members to participate in local pre-retirement courses. Information about the Fellowship and branch meetings and activities should be submitted for publication in local media, staff newspapers and the local NHS intranet The Development Officer / Fellowship Officer, the Country / Regional Representative and Central Office staff will be pleased to assist new branches with support, information and advice. However, branches are organised by the members for the members and branches are free to organise their own programme of activities and events, subscription rates etc.

The branch committee should be given a copy of the NHS Retirement Fellowship flyer “Guidance for setting up a new branch” available from the website or from Central Office.

To access guidance and templates from the website (www.nhsrf.org.uk) go to the Members’ Section then click on “Membership and Branch Information” and enter the members’ password **nhsrf1978**