IPS Spotlight

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In this issue we have reports from the North West and Trent IPS Branches and we meet Gary Thirkell, IPS Board Treasurer and long-time active supporter of IPS through his work with the Yorkshire branch and now as buddy to several other IPS branches.

PROFILE: IPS Board Treasurer, Gary Thirkell

The role of Treasurer is critical in assuring the governance of IPS funds and a responsible position given the large amount of funds from subscriptions, conferences and meetings that the society manages for the benefit of its members.

Where do you work?

I work at Leeds Teaching Hospitals as an infection prevention nurse. My role is slightly unusual as I am funded by the Estates team and work strategically and operationally with the cleaning and hospital building infrastructure. Leeds is a

beast of a trust in size covering six sites, 526,000 square metres, 130 wards, 315 outpatients, 15,000 staff, and 1200 cleaners. My role is a challenging one and focuses on all aspects of the infrastructure including ventilation, water and the Estate.

Tell us something about your background with the Society

I am very active and passionate about my Yorkshire Branch. As a branch, we have provided many Board members over the years and this gave me the impetus to become active within the Society nationally. I was treasurer at Branch level in Yorkshire for four years and this experience has been invaluable, providing me with a good grounding to take on the national position, which I began in September 2014. I was also part of the Informational Technology group that developed and maintained the early website.

What does being Treasurer involve?

It can be a busy role particularly following the National Conference when payments and expenses are being dealt with. We have an excellent management and book-keeping team who support the Treasurer in the day to day running of finances. Being on the Board was a bit daunting at first, not least because I was in the company of people I admired professionally and had quoted many times in essays and in papers! I realised very quickly that they were there to support and nurture me and they have gone on to become friends. Board development is key and my involvement has provided opportunities and support which has ultimately benefited me in my day job.

Is it true you are our IPS Twitter expert?

I am very active on Twitter with the moniker of @pollygary and engage with many members on this forum. I am now starting to get involved in the Societies Facebook page and while social media may not be for everyone it does offer a way to communicate and engage with people. I would urge all members to be active in the Society. Start small by becoming active in your branch and then I would definitely recommend taking on national commitments.

IPS North West

Claire Chadwick, North West Branch Co-ordinator

The North West Branch has a well-regarded history of collaboration and enthusiasm to go that extra mile in supporting its members through regional networking, education programmes and teamwork across the counties of Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria. With a large branch membership of 200 and three past presidents starting with Margaret Worsley in 1982, and recently Martin Kiernan, the North West branch strives to support the IPS in its drive to promote best practice in infection prevention.

Recent North West initiatives include co-ordinating the collaborative project for commissioning guidance and the development of IPS standards in alignment with the 6C's. We hold our meetings across the North West region, which have been kindly supported by local companies who are always welcome to join our shared learning and often lively debates! Education has been a cornerstone of the North West Branch activity and for many of you who are old enough (myself included), you may have attended the ENB 329 course in Manchester, set up by Margaret Worsley. We are very fortunate now to have Amanda Miskell who was appointed to the EPDC and who recently provided invaluable support as Educational Lead for the branch and Debbie Wright as IPS Board Secretary who continues to contribute to the professional development of our members.

We are fortunate to have the commitment of a full quota of branch officers, with new enthusiastic members coming forward to offer their support as deputies. I welcome Helen Fabrizio as the new North West Branch co-ordinator, as I complete my term of office in the next few months and hope that she gains as much from the experience of meeting and networking with colleagues across the country as I have. This last year, we have also welcomed members from North Wales to attend our meetings, with shared learning across the border. Our plans going forward into 2015/16 include the continued evaluation and sharing of the 6C's project, and supporting the new IPS calendar project. We also look forward to giving a warm welcome to you all again in Liverpool for the IPS Conference in September 2015.

IPS Trent

Pixy Stradzs, Branch Coordinator, Trent Branch

The Trent Branch takes in the counties of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Northamptonshire. We

have 137 members, meet four times a year and hold our annual conference in Nottingham, which is called 'The Darling Bugs of May.' Our Branch meetings typically draw 30–35 members and our conference attracts 200 delegates and around 30 commercial firms who take stands. As branch officers we understand that we have to give members something special for the membership fee. We therefore believe that the real value for IPC professionals in our patch is driven through the quality of content and speakers at our Branch meetings along with the networking opportunities. If we get the topic selection right and speakers who are at the top of their game then we find that members will respond.

We have two key initiatives on the go. Firstly we have subscribed to a continuing professional development (CPD) accreditation service and so now our four meetings and annual conference have CPD Points – members say that this is a useful benefit. Additionally we feel that we need to better understand the potential of the Branch and to this end have commissioned research that in the first instance will provide us with a profile of all existing members – where they work, who they work for/with, background and qualifications, special interests and competencies etc. From this we will be able to map the resource base and also look at the opportunities to optimise the number of members attending branch meetings. Going forward we intend, then, to widen the scope of the database to understand where other IPC professionals are on the patch who are not members so that we can entice them into membership through active communication with them to demonstrate the quality of the offering we have as a Branch.

We have a fairly new set of Branch officers and look back with immense appreciation to our former coordinator Rosie Dixon who undertook three terms of office and also Debbie Trigg our treasurer and a leading-light in our annual conference. We all know that the NHS is having to work in new and different ways to meet the funding challenge and this is being felt on an everyday basis at trust level. It's not going to get a lot better in the near future so the Trent Branch are determined to work harder to give members greater value for their membership so that the IPS remains a credible and respected education-based organisation for professional people to network and grow – especially if they are young or new to the IPC world.