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BANT REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

The revamp of the BANT Co-ordinators project has been most successful with a huge influx of new members wishing to take part along with some of the more established groups. The work has involved pulling together the BANT database into certain PCT areas. Of course, with the changes brought about by the new coalition government, it may be that the present set up of PCTs will be changed, however the great work already done will have gathered members into specific regions.

Some areas have abundant numbers of practitioners reflecting the population density whilst other areas have low populations spread over larger distances and in these regions members from several PCT areas may have been grouped together. In this way we have requested interested members to get involved from the whole of the UK and targeted all members in order to try to provide a regional group everywhere.

Whilst it is still unrealistic to say that every region will have a co-ordinator in place, at least we have a picture of areas to target. This has been a huge task and will require regular monitoring to update information.

We would like to thank those who have been regional co-ordinators, sometimes for many years, and those that are now indicating they wish to get involved.

Role of the Co-ordinator

- To be a point of contact for practitioners in the area, arranging meetings to co-ordinate support for practitioners in their work.
- To be the point of contact for enquiries from the public finding out more information about BANT and to direct members of the public to a choice of their nearest practitioner. We would recommend that you deal with local issues yourself, but refer on to Council any questions regarding BANT's organisation.
- In certain circumstances, to be the point of contact for dissemination of information or points for discussion from BANT's general administration to members, and to feed back views from local practitioners to Council. This may be done through local meetings, or, if more pressing, through more direct telephone/e-mail contact.
- To co-ordinate at least three meetings a year for local practitioners. You would set the agenda, but would sometimes need to include items for discussion as requested by BANT Council.
- To feed back information to Council indicating discussion points raised in your agenda that may require consideration or action by Council.
- To tabulate for each group the particular expertise of the members. Then, when BANT is asked for comment on a particular issue, we can eblast the regional groups and ask for response from a member with expertise in the field.
- To notify BANT administration about any radio interviews undertaken by group members, or press releases relating to local practitioners which may cause an increase in BANT enquiries. Details of dates and content would help us to respond to enquiries. Clearly these activities are often taken on at short notice and some of this detail may not be available quickly. However it would help BANT enormously to be able to prepare for an influx of enquiries.

- To help us find different venues in order to roll out a program of regional meetings that will provide a more public image of BANT, its members and the help that we can provide to the public. To visit different conference facilities and feed back to Council re costs.
- To provide the PR committee with names and contact points of health writers, journalists, and others who may be writing articles which could include information about BANT's role and contact details.
- At every opportunity publicise the BANT name and website.

Benefits of Being a Co-ordinator

We welcome your enquiries from your groups and can provide a quick turnaround of information to answer them. In addition BANT can provide a member to visit your group to expand on current issues affecting the NT profession.

- Promoting co-operation to develop and support your work, with input from local colleagues and BANT Council.
- Quick access to publicity events, e.g. calls for NT's to be involved in TV and radio programmes.
- A feeling of being an integral part of the profession and the BANT organisation.
- The opportunity to have more input, influence and involvement in BANT's role.
- The chance to be more up to date with issues under discussion.

What the Co-ordinator does not do

- When acting as a BANT co-ordinator the practitioner is expected **not** to give nutritional advice in the name of BANT. If an enquiry takes the form of a request for nutritional advice, the co-ordinator must indicate that she/he acts in this case as an individual practitioner not as a BANT representative.

Feedback from past co-ordinators

A review of past experience indicates that some regional groups meet more regularly than others, some move the meeting around the members, some have found a neutral location to suit all members travelling needs. Some pointers to remember:

- Meetings take time to arrange. Please respect the fact that someone has taken that time out of work/home time
- Some groups have a small charge to cover administration/drinks/nibbles/fee for speakers/hall hire/pay the host
- Pay promptly any fees due to cover costs
- Always be polite, supportive and constructive in your comments
- Be reliable in attending, show commitment to the group
- Always be prompt or let the host know if you cannot make it

- When you wish to stand down from leading a group please let us know and we will find a new leader

The leader of a group plays a voluntary role and the group decides how they wish to work together. We suggest having a basic agenda to work from, include one or two case studies, perhaps have a specialist topic that all have either worked on or want to improve their knowledge on, share good practice, review a chapter/book, invite other local health professionals to visit and share ideas, critically review a research paper. All of these meetings count as self directed CPD too.

There will be a consultation process over the next few months whilst we catch up with past co-ordinators, find out what worked for them, what they would like to see in the way of changes and how we can best serve our members in the regions through these groups. The role is not meant to be arduous or long term and we will be happy to hear all your ideas during the consultation process.

We encourage members to join these regional groups. Rather than thinking that working with colleagues will be competition we see it more as working together, providing opportunities to combine forces, share clinic space, build better relations with other disciplines, put together workshops, share ideas, share the cost of advertising. Networking can be quite expensive in time and money. If you join forces as a group you can share the burden. You can plan a promotion; use all your extended contacts to get the message of NT out to more people. Contact GP's, practice nurses and other health professionals. Cultivate these friendships, get the message out. Create your own power teams made up of other practitioners that have clients that may be interested in a nutritional approach to improve their health; chiropodists, beauty salons, chiropractors, dentists, nursery school leaders, NCT representatives.

The Co-ordinator list will be available on the public pages. In time, we will also add a search facility to the current 'Find A Practitioner' button so that the public can actually seek out a regional co-ordinator.