

# Foundations of Practice and Beyond

## Monday

### Stream E

Session 1 1130

Session 2 1445



### Ellen Beard

## Changing long established poor manual handling practices by fully involving the work force.

### Biography

I qualified as an Occupational Therapist at the Welsh School of Occupational Therapy, Cardiff in 1974. Since 1996 I have been employed by Gwynedd Council and involved mostly with manual handling assessments working closely with service users their families and care workers in the community. For the past 5 years I have developed my role as the Back Care Advisor and Senior Trainer in Manual handling for Gwynedd Council and am currently the chairperson for the North West North Wales Back Exchange Forum.

### Abstract

Over the years catering staff continue to succeed magnificently in preparing meals for school children in kitchens that are often less than ideal. Their employers and managers face continuous budgetary challenges with heightened public scrutiny regarding the quality of food consumed by our children.

Is it surprising that manual handling is often not high on the list of priorities? In Gwynedd Council there are 104 schools and many of the staff working in this environment will admit to having musculoskeletal type problems and accept it as an inevitable occupational hazard. During the basic manual handling training for school catering staff the handling of dining tables and benches was often raised as being a problem. Managers also identified this particular activity as being problematic suspecting that it was a cause of shoulder and upper spinal type problems amongst staff resulting in sickness and absenteeism. The manual handling team therefore decided to take a closer look at this particular activity.

Selecting one school we observed staff carrying out this work during their normal lunch time shift. Carrying out a risk assessment we discovered the task to be of a higher risk than expected. The reaction of staff to the manual handling team's intervention was mixed, most were kind and generous but a few were understandably less convinced that improvements could be made.

Winning the staff over was one of the most important first step factors in this project. To gain trust and respect we became the 'extra pair of hands' for the first few sessions. This gave us the opportunity to physically and psychologically appreciate the demands of the task and get to know the staff and dynamics of the group.

As a manual handling training team we learnt a great deal from this piece of work. We must be prepared to not expect quick fixes and appreciate the time, effort and commitment this type of work sometimes requires.

There is a huge diversity of occupations within our local authorities and we hope this session focusing upon object handling and team work will be of interest to others working in this field.