

The Agenda

Newsletter for the Agenda for Change programme

Union members vote in favour of new pay reform

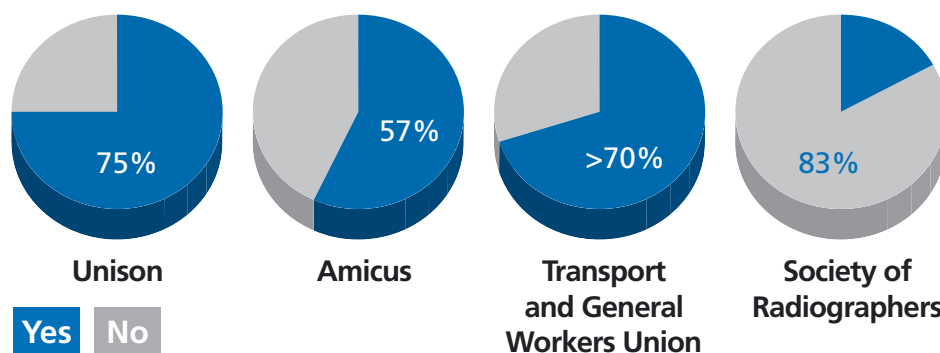
December 1 marks an historic milestone in the history of the NHS – the implementation of a new pay system affecting close on 1.2 million members of staff.

The health service's Agenda for Change programme, recently endorsed by the greater majority of unionised staff, has been described as the "most radical shake up of the NHS pay system since its launch in 1948".

It amounts to what is widely believed to be the biggest job evaluation processes ever undertaken – with over 260 nationally agreed job profiles having already been issued.

Although initial negotiations between the Department of Health and representative unions on a new pay system were concluded back in November 2002, implementation depended on the majority of unions voting in favour of a new package offering a pay deal of a 10% increase over 3 years from April 2003.

...historic milestone in history of NHS...



The NHS minimum wage has also been increased to 17% above the national minimum wage to £5.69 an hour.

Last month Unison, Amicus and the Transport and General Workers Union members voted overwhelmingly in favour of the new deal.

The only unions opposed to the new package were the Society of Radiographers and the Union

of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT).

Agenda for Change signals a break in the glass ceiling that previously held many NHS staffers back – with remuneration now based on the work done rather than title.

The system also ensures fair pay and a clearer system for career progression, involving a [Continued on page 2](#)

Message from David Moss: Programme Director: NHS Pay Modernisation.



Welcome to the first edition of "The Agenda", a regular newsletter intended to keep you up to date with all the latest news, views and developments

linked to the NHS's ambitious Agenda for Change Programme.

Within the newsletter you will be able to source all the latest learning from the Early Implementor sites, as well as a host of useful news from the Department of Health.

More importantly, it is also hoped that "The Agenda" serves as an interactive forum for debate on all Agenda for Change

Programme developments.

It has taken many years to negotiate Agenda for Change.

December 1 marks the start of implementation across the service and this, in itself, represents an ideal opportunity for the entire NHS to not only reward staff with equal pay of equal value, but also to modernise and improve the country's health service to the benefit of all.

Continued from page 1

new knowledge and skills framework linked to annual development reviews and personal development plans.

It is felt that improvements to basic pay and conditions will create a more motivated workforce with a newly registered nurse earning broadly the same as an equivalent teacher.

According to the Department of Health Programme Director: NHS Pay Reform, David Moss, Agenda for Change represents more than just a pay deal – it's a huge reform package that will not only benefit staff but patients too.

"Agenda for Change is the final piece of the jigsaw – along with the new contracts we've already introduced for consultants and GPs – which means greater quality at the heart of all the care that the NHS provides," he adds.

The methodology on how the new pay deal will be implemented was carefully developed and tested by all stakeholders, including staff, management and unions, at 12 early implementer sites across the service.

It soon became evident that the new system will allow for the development of new roles within NHS organisations,

with patients experiencing a higher quality of care tailored to individual need.

NHS organisations will also have the flexibility of developing new roles to support qualified health staff, reducing the need for patients to see a series of healthcare workers.

The system allows staff to work more flexibly, meaning patients will get treated at a time most convenient to them.

According to David it is hoped that the majority of all NHS staff will have been matched to a new pay band by March next year, with all staff assimilated by September.

"Most staff should notice a difference in their pay packets by the summer," he adds.

The Government has invested around £1 billion into Agenda for Change, but the whole process has been a collaborative effort between Government and the unions.

Agenda for Change has been developed in partnership with 17 unions over a five-year period.

"I am delighted they can join me today to mark the roll-out of this massive programme of reform – a winning deal for both staff and for patients", David concludes.

Focus on **Ambulance service**

Welcome a new era

Peter Bradley, National Advisor on Ambulance Services to the Department of Health:



Agenda for Change presents one of the biggest changes, challenges and opportunities to face the NHS Ambulance sector since its formation.

For the first time, a common basis for job evaluation, remuneration and harmonisation of terms and conditions will truly integrate ambulance staff into the heart of the NHS.

Not before time, frontline staff, in particular Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, will see substantial increases in their pay-rates to levels that will bring them on par with their professional peers elsewhere within the NHS.

A standardisation of the working week, improvements to annual leave and proper recognition and reward for the unsocial hours that most ambulance staff work are essential components of the Agenda for Change package.

Implementation is a huge challenge, but every department and every member of staff will have a role to fulfil.

Inevitably, there are some issues to work through for specific staff groups, but, with careful management in partnership with the trades unions, we believe that these challenges can be overcome.

In the longer-term the benefits derived from Agenda for Change will massively outweigh any demands of roll-out.

Personal Development Reviews for all staff are an essential component of Agenda for Change using the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework.

The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework will form the backbone of development and career escalators and will ensure that any competency gaps are quickly measured and closed.

The benefits to staff, ambulance services and patients are there to be grasped.

Finally, Agenda for Change harks a new era of partnership working with the NHS trade unions.

We in the ambulance services should welcome it.

Key elements of Agenda for Change

- fair and transparent pay system based on job evaluation
- new NHS minimum wage
- flexibility in pay retention and recruitment premia
- harmonisation of working hours
- allows development of new posts
- link between pay, skills and knowledge
- more pay for more responsibility
- easier to administer
- replaces existing Whitley Councils

Ambulance Trust jumps hurdle and reaps the benefit



Seamus Elliott, HR Director at East Anglian NHS Trust, is a big fan of Agenda for Change (AfC).

He is

adamant that an appropriate reward and remuneration system is key to the running of any successful organisation.

Since 2000 East Anglian Ambulance Trust's newly-appointed directorship has made notable strides in improving and modernising a number of the service's operational areas, with the notable exception of the rewards and pay sector.

"During the past four years we changed our operating systems, updated our technological capacity and tackled leadership, staff training and development," Seamus enthuses.

"Pay modernisation was our missing link – until we were appointed an early implementor site for Agenda for Change that is".

While mindful of the fact that it is still early days – some staff only having been on AfC contracts for a little more than a month – Seamus is nevertheless certain that there are already a number of positive spin-offs.

AfC is a good modernisation lever, which, in time, can result in better staff moral and increased productivity, he says.

While Seamus is confident that having a transparent, fair and developmental pay structure will help his Trust retain its three star rating, it is also good for staff in



that it recognises increased effort.

With productivity levels far exceeding the trust targets over the past year, Seamus attributes some of this to AfC having increased staff moral and "added value".

Though, admittedly, there will always be an element within any organisation who want more or who are simply resistant to change, he explains.

Seamus also admits that major change, in any organisation, can be disruptive in the short-term and may not necessarily lead to any immediate improvement to work practice or productivity.

In the case of East Anglian Ambulance Trust, however, there were notable reductions in staff sickness levels during the months of February and March – a factor often linked to staff morale.

He adds: "For the first time we now have a pay system that recognises that healthcare is a sector which requires a 24/7 mentality. What the NHS now needs to do is to learn to use it where it

can help improve services".

The Trust has also commenced preparing the ground for new service improvements.

Seamus explains: "New roles, such as Emergency Care Practitioners working out of hours, and Fleet Assistants who prepare ambulances for service, are being developed. AfC has given us a way of assessing an appropriate pay package for them."

The Trust is also introducing new working arrangements to meet the reduction of the working week from 40 to 37.5 hours and changing meal breaks from being inclusive in the working week to exclusive.

Change can be problematic, and while some in the Trust predicted a possible dip in service standards, this proved not to be the case.

This is a view endorsed by Eric Miller, Unison branch secretary and staff side lead for AfC.

However, not all changes introduced by AfC proved straightforward, and there are some [Continued on page 4](#)

Focus on **Ambulance service continued...**

Continued from page 3

issues – for example the banding of ambulance technicians – that require careful monitoring and sensitive management over time.

Both Eric and Seamus are of the opinion that AfC is a new open and fair system that has to be developed jointly between management and staff.

It is the role of the HR director to facilitate and support the process.

“The process of implementing AfC means that new behaviours have been developed and we are now beginning to see the spin-offs of these into better day-to-day decision making processes”, Seamus observes.

But his “hidden jewel in the crown” however is the KSF system.

“Just imagine what is achievable if we improve everyone’s performance by just 5% per year”.

It is a demanding process, however, and Seamus’s advice is to tackle it “slow and steady, start small and build on its inevitable success”.



Ambulance Trusts reap the benefits of improved career development

The new Agenda for Change system has been tested in two Ambulance “early implementer” organisations: East Anglian and North East Ambulance Trusts.

In common with non-ambulance trusts, Agenda for Change is helping to deliver better pay and career progression and allowing annual appraisal and performance reviews to effectively support career development.

Agenda for Change has also supported the modernisation of ambulance services. For example, the programme has enabled East Anglian Ambulance Trust to take responsibility for the GP Out-of-Hours service, and the explore a variety of other clinical improvements.

This modernisation will not only

benefit staff and the organisation but will ultimately help provide a better patient service.

Specific other benefits for the staff of ambulance services include:

- Annual appraisal to support career development
- New pay enhancements to reward out of hours and shift working – supplements to basic pay of up to 25% for ambulance crews
- Enhanced rate of payment for working excess hours
- Reduction in working hours to 37.5 per week – ambulance staff, typically work between 39 – 42 hours per week
- Significant improvements in staff side relationships and partnership working have had positive effects
- Some emerging evidence

that Agenda for Change has facilitated development strategies within ambulance, A&E and other related services

■ Important development opportunities for individual staff involved in the implementation of Agenda for Change.

Both early implementer trusts have found that the process of implementation has amounted in a whole system HR review.

It has also provided important development opportunities for individual members of staff involved in the project.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done, and achieved benefits will no doubt be subject to close scrutiny at a local and national level.

Change for the better

by Carole Smith, Organisational Development Manager at the Modernisation Agency's Pay Modernisation Unit, with Gurmail Bahia of change management consultants, ITS; and John Rogers of Dearden Consulting.

Coping with change in our daily lives is one of the most challenging things that anyone has to do. However, those that embrace change and remain optimistic about the benefits that it might bring are often those that gain the most from the experience. That lesson has been one of the key findings from early implementation of Agenda for Change. Over the last two years, twelve volunteer sites across the country have implemented the proposed new pay system, testing all aspects of the scheme to see what issues may arise during implementation.

Top to bottom

By their very nature, these early implementation sites tended to welcome the principles behind the new pay structures, but that by itself did not necessarily mean that implementation was easy. Perhaps the greatest lesson learned was that Agenda for Change is a major Organisational Development exercise: it affects and involves the entire organisation from top to bottom. It requires a high degree of input, commitment and understanding across all levels within the organisation. It will take up management and trade union time – lots of it. It will disrupt work patterns. Moreover, it will require high quality change management skills.

The early implementation sites created a project management team drawn from all staffing levels. Those teams benefited from high level leadership but were then supported and encouraged to take the project forward in their own right. They ensured that the team had enough staff available and gave them appropriate change management training. This involved technical training in new processes and training in using

– An overview of some of the lessons learned during early implementation of Agenda for Change



Agenda for Change as a change tool for bringing about benefits for staff and the services they provide. They advised them how to communicate their ideas – and the

importance of communication. Finally, they freed up that team to take real decisions that could genuinely change the way that the organisation worked.

As noted earlier, put in the effort and the results will more than justify the means. The early implementation sites found that Agenda for Change can bring real benefits to individuals, organisations and service delivery. But, to achieve those goals, each site had to put a lot of time and effort into being clear what benefits they wanted to see from the new pay system. Each organisation needed to ask itself what it wanted to achieve via implementation. Yes, Agenda for Change is a national scheme, but its impact will be felt very much at the local and individual level. Every organisation will need to identify at the outset its

own success criteria (“how we will know we have implemented well”) and to use this for monitoring progress.

Acceptance needed

So what was the secret of local input at the early implementation sites? Well, there had to be an acceptance that implementation of Agenda for Change requires management and the recognised trade unions to really work together. It is all too easy to talk about partnership working and then forget about it as soon as differences of opinion arise. By working together to create solutions, the early implementation sites were able to move forward at a much faster pace than previously anticipated. Creating a teamwork ethic across all groups, at all levels within the organisation was key. We now find that partnership working has had a profound effect on many early implementers, with partnership extending well beyond the formalities of implementation. This presents quite a challenge to some managers and staff representatives. Many people have had to challenge attitudes in themselves. One ex-TU official who had made a career out of adversarial work came to believe that partnership was more effective.

Furthermore, sites came to recognise that change means doing things differently and doing different things. By understanding and embracing the value of new working practices, they found solutions to implementation problems much more quickly than those that remained attached to the way that things have been done in the past. Trying to impose a new pay system upon old working practices simply will not work. Implementing Agenda for Change requires open minds across all levels of the organisation and by all groups involved in its introduction. An experienced manager observed that

[Continued on page 6](#)

Strategy lesson

- Do not underestimate the amount of time needed.
- Believe in and follow the partnership approach.
- Ensure project teams are adequately staffed, trained and given delegated authority to make things happen.
- Ensure team members are drawn from all levels of the organisation.
- Do not skip on the basic information gathering processes.
- Communicate before, during and after the implementation process.

Agenda for Change

Continued from page 5

Agenda for Change had paved the way for her to implement staff ideas.

Out with the old

The great thing about Agenda for Change is that it forces all organisations to do a 'stock take' of their staff and skills. It makes you look very carefully at how you currently deploy people, your payroll capacity, and how many staff report to each line manager. Indeed, early implementation sites that did not pay enough attention to arming themselves with this basic knowledge found that the implementation process was hindered further down the line. By gaining a good knowledge of this core information, the implementation team will be able to see opportunities for change and new ways of working that are just not visible without such a broad in-depth review.

Such knowledge also brings benefits of another kind. There were some implications for organisational structure and culture. In some cases, we found that very flat, non-hierarchical organisations needed to find creative ways to introduce the development reviews that are an integral part of the new system using the Knowledge and Skills Framework. Rather than introducing new hierarchical levels or placing an impossible burden on line

What does it mean for me?

All of the early implementation sites found that assimilation – the point when individuals discover what the process actually means for them – can lead to earlier communications being forgotten. It is, after all, easy to accept that Agenda for Change is a good thing until it actually affects your pay and the way you carry out your role. This is a crucial time for good communications. Experience from the early implementation sites suggests that all offer letters should also include a reminder of how the process has been conducted and why. Examples of these and other "early implementer solutions" can be found on the Agenda for Change website: www.modern.nhs.uk/agendaforchange

managers, such sites developed new approaches such as peer review and development. Furthermore, we noted that Agenda for Change puts a premium on the wide sharing of information. This change was felt especially in sites with more traditional structures and established levels of decision making where it will be difficult to return to 'knowledge is power' modes of management. The proposed new pay system stresses the importance of sharing information as a means of empowering all staff members for the future.

Tell them about it

The power of communication should be stressed throughout the whole Agenda for Change implementation timetable. The only way to manage large-scale organisational development of this kind is to carry everyone along with you as the process unfolds.

The project team has to tell staff what decisions are being taken, and why. It should inform them where difficult issues are set to be resolved and the debate that has gone into solving such problems. Crucially, the team has to manage expectations. Agenda for Change can work wonders for staff motivation and development but it will not happen overnight. Staff members have to be aware of the benefits that can follow but also given a reality check as they go along. We recognise that some of the career development benefits are unlikely to be seen for several years into the future. Trying to carry staff members along on the project by giving them false hopes of more rapid benefits will only lead to disappointment. Using the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework effectively over time offers many opportunities for good quality career development for our futures.



Communication lines

Do:

- Use a variety of communication channels – especially face-to-face.
- Regularly update staff on the process.
- Communicate across the project strands within the team.
- Manage expectations.
- Listen and invite feedback.
- Repeat key messages at every opportunity.
- Nip rumours in the bud
- Be timely and accurate in communicating with staff

A toolkit is available for NHS communication managers on NHS Commslink

Don't:

- Think that your message has been conveyed after one communication.
- Hype expectations in order to achieve a quicker result.
- Just tell staff about positive progress.
- Believe that everyone understands the process.
- Assume that people understand the reasons why decisions have been made.

The early implementer sites found Agenda for Change all consuming in its introduction but are now beginning to step down their project teams as implementation becomes embedded. They encourage others to embrace the changes that it brings about in order to gain greater benefits from the process. Introducing the new pay system is a massive organisational development exercise. Recognise the challenge but view it in a positive light and you will be rewarded by its positive impacts at a much earlier stage.

PLEASE SUBSCRIBE

For advice on Agenda for Change and news from Early Implementer Sites visit www.modern.nhs.uk/agendaforchange

To receive your own copy of The Agenda send your details to: pmutemp@dh.gsi.gov.uk