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Andrew Foster
Director, Workforce Directorate
Department of Health
Richmond House
Whitehall
LONDON

Dear Andrew

Implementation of Agenda for Change Targets

It has become clear to us that we need to discuss with the Department of Health the completion of Agenda for Change assimilation. This issue was formally discussed by the Executive of the NHS Staff Council on 18 July 2005.

The level of concern from a number of NHS employers indicates that both staff and management are anxious about completion. Looking at current monitoring returns, despite the enormous efforts made in local NHS organisations we do not think that the target for implementation we set out in the Agenda for Change Agreement will be fully met and we need to manage together both the political and the practical implications of that. In particular, we are keen to discuss a managed process that would ensure that the minority of staff who will not be assimilated by 30 September move to the new pay system as soon as is practicable, and certainly by the end of December 2005.

It is important that the integrity of the new pay system be maintained, and therefore implementation must be in accordance with the processes outlined in the national agreement. It is also important that any completion plan is seen as a natural way of bringing the implementation process to an end, not as a failure by the parties to the agreement – and equally that a clear end-point for implementation remains in place.

We therefore think it important that any local plans to complete implementation of Agenda for Change must be based on an agreed partnership approach, consistent with the spirit of Agenda for Change.

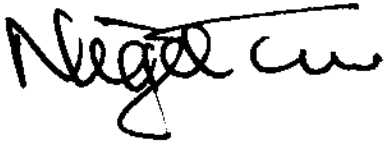
We offer the following proposal:

- That the parties formally review/take stock of the assimilation during September.
- The approach should be to look at solutions on an employer by employer basis.
- The emphasis should be on local employers to devise project completion plans in partnership, under the umbrella of the Agenda for Change agreement.

- The local partners would need to agree a firm project plan - signed off by the chief executive and local staff side.
- The locally agreed plan should include firm numbers for matching, evaluation and assimilation each month to allow progress against the plan to be reported each month. Local plans would also include proposals for ensuring that the NHS KSF was being implemented and should identify local risks to progress and how these would be managed.
- Proposals to be submitted to and agreed by the relevant strategic health authority who would have the responsibility for the performance management of the locally agreed plans, with accountability to DH.
- The Department of Health to provide regular update reports on progress of implementation to meetings of the Executive of the NHS Staff Council.

We would be happy to discuss this further with you, perhaps via a meeting during August.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Turner', with a horizontal line drawn above the name.

Nigel Turner
Chair, Employer's Side
Executive of NHS Staff Council

Mike Jackson
Chair, Staff Side
Executive of NHS Staff Council