

Agenda for change

Early Implementers

What are Early Implementers?

There are 12 trusts in England which have been identified as Early Implementer Sites. These sites have been jointly identified by the Department of Health and Staff Side organisations as development sites for the proposed Agenda for Change system.

When would these sites be established?

The earliest possible date for implementation for the first 12 development sites would be 1 June 2003. However the agreement accepts that this date may be put back if the outcome of consultation is not known by 31 May.

Why are they important?

An integral part of the proposals is that Early Implementer sites would be monitored and evaluated over their first twelve months. Recent confirmation that the Department of Health will return to areas of concern within the agreement following the evaluation phase means that UNISON would have the opportunity to identify and seek resolution of these issues before taking the decision on full roll out of the system across the UK.

UNISON would work closely with activists and members within all of the Early Implementer sites to ensure that issues of concern are brought to the fore within the evaluation phase. Networks will be established to strengthen links

between branches, regions and national office to both fully support members through the assimilation and implementation process and generate meaningful information for those who will return to discuss the proposals with the Department of Health.

What concerns are likely to be raised by the Early Implementer sites?

UNISON has already undertaken detailed work to identify likely areas of concern with the system, which currently include:

- Lack of job profiles for less generic roles
- Resolution of currently inaccurate profiles
- Best practice for assimilation
- Identifying individuals needing protection
- Working of the proposed night shift, unsocial hours and weekend working arrangements

Who would evaluate these Early Implementers and how would it be done?

This will be evaluated through the NHS Staff Council and the Joint Secretaries' Group. UNISON is a key member of both these groups and has sought and received a written assurance from the Department of Health that issues of concern generated by the Early Implementation

phase may be raised before full roll out of Agenda for Change. During the evaluation, evidence will be sought for improvements against the following criteria:

- Better pay
- Fair pay
- Equal opportunity and diversity
- Career development
- Morale
- Recruitment and retention

These criteria will be evaluated using a number of different methods, including statistical and data analysis; detailed comparison with other Early Implementers and comparable sites; staff attitude surveys and new procedures developed by the NHS Staff Council

What would happen to this information?

The results of the evaluation process would be available for full discussion and debate in Spring 2004. This would give UNISON a vital mechanism for identifying key issues of concern on which we would seek resolution before members vote on the UK-wide roll out of the Agenda for Change system.

Would the Agenda for Change system be changed in the light of evaluation?

UNISON has sought and received written assurance from the Department of Health that issues and problems identified through Early Implementation can be raised and addressed via direct negotiation before UK wide roll out.

Can we agree to Early Implementation going ahead without agreeing to the three year pay deal?

No. The government has made it clear that acceptance of the Early Implementers going ahead is inextricably linked to the three year pay deal.

Does this mean that if I vote for Early Implementation in these 12 sites I am voting for acceptance of the whole of Agenda for Change?

No. UNISON's members will be able to express their views in two separate ballots. The first, in May 2003 would determine acceptance of Early Implementation and the three-year pay deal of 3.225% per year. There would then be a second ballot on the whole package in 2004 following the evaluation of Early Implementers.

If you want to know more about Agenda for Change, speak to your steward, attend the hundreds of meetings being called by UNISON, visit our website www.unison.org.uk/healthcare/a4c or phone UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845