

Agenda for change

Trade Union Facilities

This briefing gives UNISON branch activists information about the facilities they could expect if the Agenda for Change proposals were accepted and implemented. It also contains a summary of the training needed by branch activists to enable UNISON to play a full partnership role at local level and to make the most of the organising opportunities offered by Agenda for Change.

Time spent by UNISON representatives on implementation and operation of the Agenda for Change proposals would be valuable and productive time and should not be unreasonably refused by management.

UNISON, along with other trade unions/staff side organisations would press for backfill of activists' posts while on release to undertake both training and duties associated with the proposals.

Local facilities agreements should already state that 'reasonable time off with pay during working hours should be granted to representatives to undertake a range of duties'. These duties would include negotiations and/or consultation on matters relating to terms and conditions of employment and attendance at meetings connected with the established local machinery. Local facilities agreements should include time to prepare for such meetings and to disseminate information and outcomes to members.

As in any facilities agreement, we would not wish to be too specific about the amount of time off required, but would rather rely on the ACAS wording of 'reasonable time off'. However the Agenda for Change proposals are helpful in that they set out the areas, which might be dealt with by local negotiation such as:

- Job matching panels
- Appeals panels for job evaluation
- Recruitment and retention premia
 - application and amounts
- High cost area supplements
 - application and amounts
- On-call travel time payments
- Out of hours payments (for those working 5 or less unsocial hours)
- Arrangements for provision of extended service cover
- Monitoring of pay progression for equality and parity

The commitment to partnership working is explicit throughout the Agenda for Change proposals. Further details will be issued to demonstrate this commitment to ensure that representatives of trade unions are released appropriately to participate in the partnership process so that they can be fully involved in the development and implementation of the Agenda for Change proposals at local level.

Local facilities agreements may need to be renegotiated and the NHS Staff Council would monitor the adequacy of such arrangements.

Training

The commitment to partnership working is supported by the recognition for thorough training to undertake the activities involved in the implementation of Agenda for Change.

It is anticipated that union representatives would need to be released to participate in training on major elements of the proposals, including training in the technicalities of the job evaluation scheme and its application. Not all jobs would be given a national job profile and there would be a need for local job evaluation using the national definitions. There should be a joint union/management evaluation team. Training around this might involve:

joint training with the management side to cover local job evaluation.

Where relevant, training should be undertaken jointly with management, in addition to specific training provided for UNISON representatives:

e.g. advocacy training to support members requiring representation at appeals panels.

Appeals procedures

There should be agreed procedures at local level for dealing with differences over the local application of the new national agreement to individual pay and terms and conditions of service, including:

- the application of the unsocial hours system
- the use of local recruitment and

- retention premia
- the regularity of Development Reviews
- the provision of support for training
- the progression of staff through pay band gateways

Organisations could use established grievance procedures or develop new systems if deemed necessary. See Annex F of the proposals for more details on appeals procedure.

How would this meet UNISON's organising agenda?

The Agenda for Change proposals give UNISON the opportunity to increase its profile within NHS organisations, to recruit members and further embed the principles of trade union participation within the NHS human resources strategy.

Agenda for Change offers some key organising and recruiting opportunities for activists and provides us with further chances to raise UNISON's profile within the workplace and local health employers through involvement in and monitoring of those elements to be dealt with by local negotiation. Chapter 10 of the proposals sets out the monitoring arrangements, which would need to be applied during early implementation. UNISON would use the data collected (this would be gathered by age, occupational group, ethnicity, disability, gender etc.) in order to assess the impact of the proposals on our members in advance of their decision to agree roll-out to the rest of the NHS. In the event that roll-out occurs, local representatives would need to use similar monitoring mechanisms to assess the impact in their locality.