

health worker

written for healthworkers by healthworkers

As up to a third of early implementer staff stand to lose...

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

IS THIS THE DEAL WE WANT?

AGENDA FOR CHANGE is being pushed by New Labour and our union leaders as the long overdue replacement for Whitley.

Expectations amongst low paid, dedicated and hard-working NHS staff are high. Unison, Amicus, and other health unions are due to hold ballots this autumn to ask members if they want to accept the offer.

Early implementer pilot sites have been in operation for about a year. Information is not complete but based upon what we have learned to date the situation does not look good for many members.

The final reports from the early implementers are due at the end of this month but it has already emerged that:

- *Some 15 – 18 percent of the 9000 staff in the early implementers that have been dealt with so far (about 25 percent of the total) will lose pay and will need protection*
- *In Sunderland this was up to 37 percent. This is so high that around 200 staff walked out. Not surprisingly that Trust has agreed that no one will be assimilated until this is reviewed*
- *In West Lothian, Scotland, a paper exercise reveals that 36.8 percent of the workforce would require protection. Amongst some of the lowest paid staff groups such as ancillaries this is 50 percent and admin and clerical 45 percent!*

Most of this appears to come as a result of the loss of unsocial hours payments. This is particularly bad for low paid ancillary staff who rely heavily on such payments to make their wages up. This means that the proposed agreement is failing even before it is rolled out!

A “success criterion” for the deal is that no more than 8 percent of staff should be on protection.

Healthworker argued last year that even this figure was too many. The unions and the Department of Health are committed to negotiate an improvement.

But will it be good enough?

Will they also address the problems that we identified

last year and others that have emerged since?

These problems include:

- *A lack of funding to ensure decent pay for all as well as implementing the deal*
- *The appallingly low rate of band 1*
- *The lack of incentive to work weekends, nights and bank holidays*
- *A poor protection agreement that freezes pay*
- *The slashing of pay for some staff groups who have won significant pay rises using equal pay law, such as speech and language therapists and potentially many staff in Carlisle*
- *An inbuilt “clinical bias” that means downgrading for many admin and clerical staff, particularly many of the medical secretaries who made gains on the basis of regionally coordinated campaigns of industrial action over the last three years.*
- *Poor on call payments options, worse than many negotiated locally. Early implementers appear to have not even addressed this problem sufficiently for us to analyse what the effect will be.*
- *London weighting and high cost are payments that are not good enough and are percentage based, thus discriminating against the lower paid. Grade drift in London shows that this system is already failing.*

We will have to wait to see the final report before we can make a decision about whether the deal is acceptable.

We fear that this is unlikely.

Unless there have been significant changes to address the problems outlined above then we will have to conclude that this is a bad deal for health workers.

In that case we will have to reject the package and vote NO in the union ballots.

Many have already decided to vote no whilst many others—because of the complexity of the offer and the lack of information—have yet to decide.

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GET TO THIS CONFERENCE

Healthworker is hosting a conference on Saturday 31 July (see advert) in order to give us a chance to look at the final offer and debate our response for the second ballots.

We will also be discussing organising strategies for ensuring all staff are fully informed about the

offer and maximising participation in the ballots.

We will also be nominating and electing the editorial board for Healthworker.

■ **For more information about the conference contact Caroline Bedale on 0161 620 9497 or email c.bedale@unsionfree.net**

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

IS THIS THE DEAL WE WANT?

A conference to discuss strategy and campaigning for all health workers

Saturday 31 July, 1.15 to 5pm

Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham (near to Moor Street ⇌ and New Street ⇌)

Registration fee £6, plus pooled fare system.

Name Address

Phone Email

Please make cheques payable to C Bedale and send to 123 Coppice Street, Oldham OL8 4BH