

Pharmacy

News from Unison

Agenda for Change – Trade Unions Consider Response

The publication of the final Job Revaluation scheme together with a range of job profiles has made the implications of Agenda for Change clearer. With the publication of the Proposed Agreement Handbook, it is now possible to start to work out for large numbers of staff precisely what the scheme means.

Unfortunately, there are still gaps in the job profiles, most notably for pharmacy technicians and assistants, and some of the press reports have been misleading. We have not reached an agreement and the proposals are complex and need to be carefully considered.

It is for that reason that UNISON has not rushed to reach a decision on whether or not to recommend the proposals. Our view is that these are radical changes that need time for consideration.

That is why the Special Meeting of UNISON's Health Service Group Executive called on January 29th deferred a recommendation. Members representing a cross section of occupations, and all

regions agreed to meet again on March 7th for further discussion.

In addition there are still some job profiles not agreed or completed. Job profiles for a pharmacy assistant and pharmacy technician are in the pipeline. Until those job profiles are agreed, it will not be possible to work out precisely how staff are affected by the proposals.

For staff in pharmacy, key issues to consider will include:

- where are job profiled jobs in the grading structure?
- where will job profiles not yet agreed or completed be?
- where does the balance lie between improvements in some aspects (eg contractual overtime) and concerns about others

UNISON will ensure that all branches are kept up to date with the latest developments and we will also post news on the UNISON web site:

www.unison.org/healthcare

including Frequently Asked Questions. The full documents have been sent to all UNISON branches this week and all regions are arranging meetings to brief stewards. The documents can also be downloaded from the unison web site as well.

UNISON's Process

UNISON's formal consultation will include a special April conference on

the pay proposals as part of the 2003 Health Conference in early April, and this will be followed by a ballot of all members on the pay proposals.

In addition, we are working with our Education Department to put together a training pack, which will ensure that our members can be fully briefed and consulted on all aspects of the pay proposals.

UNISON has also met with the executive of the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK and will be responding jointly to the key issues as they arise.

Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs

UNISON has been asked to comment on the draft of a Health and Safety Executive Information Document entitled **Safe handling of Cytotoxic Drugs**.

If you have a particular interest in health and safety and would be willing to comment, please let Roger Kline know on r.kline@unison.co.uk and a copy can be sent to you.

APT-UK Conference

Please find attached to this newsletter a flyer and agenda for the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK Annual Professional Conference.

UNISON will have a stand at this important event and will be speaking on Agenda for Change. Applications direct to the APT-UK please.

Healthcare Scientists Careers Pathways

UNISON was represented at a constructive meeting held in Leeds on 21st January 2003 to discuss how to best develop improved career pathways for healthcare scientists.

Although the meeting did not specifically cover pharmacy issues many of the items covered will be of interest to UNISON members in pharmacy departments because similar developments can be expected, especially as Pharmacy Workforce in the NHS is implemented.

1. Purpose of the meeting. The meeting's purpose was to pull together some of the key aspects of the Human resources strategy across the Healthcare Scientists workforce. Healthcare Scientists are as defined in **Making the Change (2001)** which counts all staff working in scientific occupations as healthcare scientists - clinical scientists, other scientific professions, technical groups not yet regulated and assistant grades of staff, over 40,000 in all. The meeting was specifically focussed on "developing career pathways and career development for all such staff".

2. Wider context. It became clear that:

- the discussion inevitably linked in to a range of other developments directly affecting scientific staff

- the model was that developed for nursing staff and for PAMS.

In particular the discussion linked together:

- the possible impact of pay bands developed for Agenda for Change - and the use of increasing skills and knowledge as the main means of moving through the pay bands
- the need to ensure staff were able to move from the lowest grades as assistant technicians through the scientific grades to clinical scientist and consultant scientist posts
- the development of the Knowledge and Skills Framework
- the development of the National Occupational Standards project for Healthcare Scientists as another means of both mapping the workforce and providing the basis of career development
- moves to radically amend training - both content and access
- movement within and between specific occupational groups within the Healthcare Scientists group

3. Importance to UNISON

This is a far-reaching agenda that UNISON In addition to the issues flagged up above:

- the workforce is planned to grow steadily over the next few years
- most of the staff concerned with be covered by statutory regulation

(HPC) in the near future - and are already being proposed to move into the PRB under Agenda for Change

- major changes in flexibility between and within occupations is expected.

UNISON is directly involved in these discussions, which involve almost all the major professional bodies, and Amicus.

Implications

- a. We need to ensure our stewards and the PTB Committee (and Officers) are clear on the key issues and the implications for our work
- b. We need to ensure we are represented at all the key meetings
- c. We need to develop an effective way of sharing information arising from such meetings and feeding back into them members views

We need to continue to response to key consultation documents such as "Pathology – the essential service" in the way we have been.

Unison news service

UNISON now provides a very useful weekly news service to stewards and activists on more general issues affecting the public sector as well as NHS news. If you'd like to subscribe and receive it automatically, e: mail www.unison.org.uk/news/maillinglist

The Duty of Care

The web pages linked to this new UNISON publication have now been launched and include:

- pdf of the full publication
- FAQ's
- drop down pro forma letters
- a pro forma survey to be adapted for local use

and

- eventually examples of Best Practice where members have successfully raised issues covered in the handbook.

You can visit the site at

www.unison.org/healthcare/dutyofcare

If you want to order the handbook directly contact your branch secretary in the first instance or visit the UNISON publications service on our web site.

PLEASE PASS THIS ON!!

The number of subscribers to Pharmacy is growing. Feel free to forward this to any colleagues who are UNISON members or who might want to subscribe directly – in your Department or another.

Please also note. A number of e:mail addresses sent in to this office by post have been incorrect or proved difficult to read. If you know some who asked to receive this e: mail bulletin are didn't please e:mail us directly and we'll add your name.