BranchBriefing

News from the Health Service Group Executive

Time to ramp up the Health Bill battle

THE Health Service Group Executive (SGE) has vowed to ramp up the pressure on the government and expose the disastrous impact of the Health and Social Care Bill on England.

Meeting the day after the Bill passed its second reading in Parliament, the SGE sharpened its campaigning strategy for the remainder of the Bill's passage through Parliament and beyond.

The campaign has already scored some great successes, keeping the Bill high on the media's agenda and forcing a rattled government onto the back foot. Those successes reflected the mammoth effort across the union to expose the fragmentation and privatisation at the heart of the government's plans.

The SGE went on to call for an impressive turnout at the demonstration in London on 26 March against public service cuts. For more information on the campaign and the march, go to www.unison.org.uk

Brighter conference takes shape

AGAINST the background of the government's cuts onslaught, the Service Group Executive approved the latest steps for reshaping Health Conference with a fresh format for this year's event between 4 and 6 April in Liverpool.

As well as plenty of time dedicated to debating union policy on motions and amendments, there will also be much greater space given to seminars that help activists develop and discuss their skills to meet the challenges facing UNISON.

Health Conference will also be taking its message out from the conference floor onto the streets of Liverpool with a major demo against the savage cuts facing public services.

A "Question Time" style panel debate will stimulate fresh perspectives on strategies, along with contributions from Shadow Health Secretary John Healey and union leader Kevin Callinan on experiences in the Republic of Ireland.

UNISON Health Care

Pay spotlight turns local

The SGE turned its attention to maximising support for branches who face attacks on pay, terms and conditions, following its decision at an emergency meeting in January to firmly reject national proposals from NHS employers.

The proposals sought a two-year halt to incremental pay progression in exchange for a no compulsory redundancy guarantee for staff on Bands 1 to 6 in England.

However, the SGE ruled that it could not support a further pay freeze for health staff that was also divisive in excluding higher banded staff and dubious in its ability to ensure that Trusts comply with a no compulsory redundancy agreement.

UNISON and other health unions are now set to generate joint advice for staff sides on responding to proposals to impose cuts to terms and conditions locally, while branches are being encouraged to inform their Regional Organiser of any local developments.

Meanwhile, UNISON has provided written and oral evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body as part of its annual evidence gathering process in deciding its recommendations for the 2011/12 pay round. Despite the government's decision to freeze the pay of all staff on pay rates of over £21,000, the SGE made the case on behalf of all workers for an increase in pay rates that protects them against the impact of inflation, which is currently running at a hefty 4.8%. The review body is expected to announce its recommendations by early March.

Diary of key UNISON Health events

March

- Health SGE (16 Mar)
- Recommendation of NHS Pay Review Body on 2011/12 pay rates
- Hutton Public Service Pension Review Final Report
- Budget (23 Mar)
- TUC march and rally for public services (26 Mar)

April

- Health Conference (4-6 Apr)

May

- Nursing and Midwifery Professional Seminar (11-12 May)

June

- National Delegate Conference (21—24 Jun)

Now available on UNISON's website

NEW material is constantly being added to the UNISON Healthcare website at www.unison.org.uk/healthcare. The items below are among the highlights over recent months.

Our NHS Our Future: Rebutting the Rebuttals factsheet, Model letter to MP, Model letter to GP, poster, leaflet

Newsletter: Primary Care News; Ancillary Matters

Events: Nursing and Midwifery Professional Seminar

Factsheets / Reports: What is "Any Willing Provider"?, UNISON and Staff Side evidence to NHS Pay Review Body, Crying Out for Help report on student financial survey

Your reps on the Health SGE

Regional representatives:

Eastern: Jenni Saunders, Gill Malik, Harry Seddon

East Midlands: Christine Fenton, Roz Norman (SGE Vice Chair), Merlyn Wilson

Greater London: Mike Davey, Janet Maiden, Hayley Richards

Northern: Maria Alberts, George Barron (SGE Vice Chair)

Northern Ireland: Lucia McKeever, Tommy Steenson

North West: Angela Patterson, Karen Reissmann, Harry Hanley

Scotland: Alex Joyce, Lilian Macer (SGE Chair)

South East: Stephen Bell, Jean Butcher, Clare Stoner

South West: Roger Davey, Trudie Brailey

Wales: Stuart Egan, Llinos Phillips

West Midlands: Mary Locke, Jenny Harvey

Yorkshire and Humberside: Alison Brown, Sheila Hepworth, Adrian O'Malley

Sector Committee representatives:

Admin and Clerical: Tina Cross

Ambulance: Joseph Conaghan

Ancillary: Hugh McDyer

Nursing and Midwifery: Peter Atkinson

Professional and Technical 'A': Pam Barr-Davies

Professional and Technical 'B': Stephen Kennedy / Pat Davies (job share)

NEC representatives:

Eric Roberts, Christine Sullivan, Clare Williams, Ann Moses

BAOT: Peter Hewin

The term of office for regional and sector reps runs from 2010 to 2012. For NEC reps, the term runs from 2009 to 2011.