Welcome to the Science, Technical and Therapy newsletter

Welcome to Science, Technical and Therapy (STAT) Occupational Group Newsletter. STAT covers a really diverse range of members from biomedical scientists, physiologists and arts therapists to estates staff and chaplains. By bringing together all these occupational groups, STAT members now have a strong voice which will put UNISON in a better position to organise and campaign.

NHS pay update

By the end of 2014, inflation will have cut an average of 10% from the value of NHS staff wages despite a significant number of UNISON members reporting an increase in workloads and working hours.

This year the NHS Pay Review Body recommended a 1% rise for all NHS staff; The English Department of Health, however, stated that this was unaffordable and have announced a 1% unconsolidated pay award for those NHS staff on the top of their bands. Those staff who will receive an incremental rise to a higher point in their band will not get the 1%.

The Department of Health also announced that they would repeat this award with an increase to 2% (unconsolidated) next year (2015/16), and consolidate the award if staff agreed to an incremental pay freeze for a year in 2015/16.

An unconsolidated pay award means it will be given as an additional sum, and will not be added on to hourly rates so it will not count for unsocial hours or overtime payments. This means that a member at the top of band 5 would get a sum amounting to about £5 per week.

At the same time the Scottish Government announced a 1% increase to all pay points (consolidated) with additional sums at the bottom to take the lowest paid in the NHS in Scotland above the Living Wage level. The Welsh Government announced that they would be making the same award as announced in England but that they reserve the right to distribute it differently. No announcement has yet been made in Northern Ireland, but it is anticipated that the award will mirror the English award, as this has been the case in previous years.

What are our next steps?

UNISON has not ruled any options out, saying that we will be talking to members about how we respond. Some other unions have already announced that they will ballot. Although strike action is not ruled out by UNISON, head of health Christina McAnea has emphasised that NHS staff never take strike action lightly - so our membership will be considering this carefully, along with other options. The pay settlement, and the government contempt it shows towards NHS staff, is bound to be a hot topic at UNISON’s health conference in Brighton from 14 to 16 April.

Things you can do

- Join the Worth It Campaign http://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/unison-campaigns/worth-it/home/
- You can help by joining our social media Worth It groups
- Follow the campaign on facebook.com/WORTHitUNISON and twitter.com/WorthIt_unison
New guidelines on cutting sick leave

The NHS Staff Council has produced revised guidelines on the prevention and management of sickness absence among NHS staff. This follows the 2009 Boorman Review which estimated that sickness absence in the NHS costs around £555 million.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership group, which is a sub-group of the NHS Staff council, focuses on five key principles:

1. partnership working between unions and management
2. strong leadership and support visible at board level
3. a model of continuous improvement
4. effective line management support
5. access to competent advice.

The overall theme is to create safe and healthy workplaces and guidance on providing support when people go off sick, as well as best practice for the development of sickness policies. You can see the guidelines at www.nhsemployers.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Guidelines-prevention-management-sickness-absence-Nov-13.pdf

UNISON’s One Team campaign highlights the important role that support staff play in ensuring patient care and safety. UNISON believes that all staff, whatever their job, play an important role in caring for patients and that we should put an end to the ‘frontline’ and ‘back office’ rhetoric which creates an artificial split between members of staff working in the NHS.

Unfortunately, support staff in the NHS continue to suffer as a consequence of the cuts and austerity measures, and have already been subjected to an increase in zero hour contracts, down banding and compulsory redundancies. UNISON fears that more of these vital jobs may go as more savings are sought.

It is important to remember that in the NHS, scientific, technical and therapy services would find it very hard to function without the support of administrative staff who are responsible for booking appointments for patients, or finance staff who pay invoices for equipment which is vital in order for you to carry out your work effectively. UNISON believes that these so called ‘back office’ functions are there for a good reason, to support and enable clinicians to focus on patient care. That is why UNISON has launched the One Team campaign.

Watch out for more information on the UNISON website but in the meantime, ask your nursing and other clinical colleagues for comments about how important operational staff are and send them into health@unison.co.uk.

One Team – caring for patients

New guidance on equality and diversity in the workplace

The NHS Staff Council’s Equality and Diversity Group have reviewed the advice within the national terms and conditions handbook and produced new, additional guidance covering the following areas:

● **Guidance on flexible working for the NHS** – This provides some advice for managers on good practice when accommodating the needs of carers. The government confirmed it will extend the right to request flexible working to all employees, with a duty for employers to respond within a ‘reasonable time period’.

● **Guidance relating to disability for the NHS** – this highlights good practice advice for the management of disabled staff and seeks to remove barriers that deny disabled people equality in the workplace.

● **Guidance on dealing with requests for time off** – this offers good practice advice to managers on dealing with a range of sensitive time off request issues including; fertility treatment, surrogacy and adoption.

UNISON welcomes The NHS Employers strategy to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of the NHS, along with any guidance aimed to help organisations meet their duties under the Equality Act, and promote best practice in the workplace. To find out more, go to the NHS Employers website at http://www.nhsemployers.org/PayAndContracts/CommitteesAndNegotiatingGroups/NHSStaffCouncil/Pages/EqualitiesandDiversityGroup%20of%20the%20NHS%20Staff%20Council.aspx
The integration of health and social care in England

Until now there has only been full structural integration in Northern Ireland. In recent months however, there has been an increase in plans to produce more integrated working across all of the other countries in the UK.

In England, local authorities and NHS bodies already have a number of options for integrating services; for example through pooling budgets, joining together their staff and management structures, delegating commissioning responsibilities to each other, or establishing joint commissioning arrangements.

The government has announced 14 “pioneers” who are already in the process of bringing services together. Many of these emphasise preventative care for the elderly and several seek to create a single point of access for patients/users, while almost all of them make explicit reference to working across health and social care.

So far, £3.8 billion has been earmarked for the Integration Transformation Fund which sits in a pooled budget “under joint governance between CCGs and local authorities”.

Labour and “whole person care”
The shadow health secretary Andy Burnham MP has announced ambitious plans for introducing a system of “whole person care”, in which physical and mental health is fully integrated with social care. Originally the plans involved an extended role for councils in healthcare. However, in recent weeks it has been announced that Labour will still attempt to integrate health and social care but the funding is likely to remain within the NHS rather than the councils.

For more information, including the list of pioneers please contact s.bandesha@unison.co.uk.

Government publishes New Fair Deal guidance

Last autumn the government published the New Fair Deal guidance for England and Wales which applies where a public service is outsourced to a private/independent provider.

Under this guidance, staff whose employment is compulsorily transferred under TUPE from the NHS to independent providers of clinical services will generally have a right to continued access to the NHS Pension Scheme, rather than a broadly comparable scheme as was previously the case.

The new guidance also confirms that where NHS contracts involving staff covered by the existing Fair Deal policy are retendered, there will be a presumption that staff should be offered access to the NHS pension scheme.

The guidance is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fair-deal-guidance

Regional representatives of STAT. To contact them, email: health@unison.co.uk

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Be Safe, speak up!

UNISON is currently running a ‘Be Safe’ campaign, which aims to raise awareness within health and social care organisations about the need for safe staffing levels to ensure that patient care and safety is not put at risk.

UNISON has also piloted a ‘Be Safe, Speak Up’ training course, which aims to help staff be more confident about raising concerns at work and the feedback has been very positive.

UNISON’s strategy is to work with employers and managers to roll out this training for staff working across all healthcare organisations, whether or not they are members.

We know that even though our members work extremely hard to provide the best care possible, sometimes they have to do this without the proper resources needed to meet the needs of their patients.

Regions will now be starting to develop their own roll out plans for the Be Safe, Speak up course. To find out more about the training opportunities in your area, please contact your region or your branch who will be able to give you further information on courses for 2014.

If you don’t know how to get in touch with your region or branch, call UNISONdirect on 0800 0 857 857 who will be able to point you in the right direction.

Remember, much of the training offered by UNISON is free and can help you with both your personal and professional development.

Getting STAT on the agenda – motion to conference

The National Science, Technical and Therapy Occupational Group have put together a motion which calls for branches to recognise the significant contribution that staff working in science, technical and therapy roles provide to the whole person care of patients in the NHS.

The motion highlights the need to develop national, regional and local networks to improve the way we organise a group which encompasses such a broad range of roles, from occupational therapists and chaplains to biomedical scientists and clinical physiologists.

The motion recognises the need to develop an effective recruitment and organising strategy by working with regions and the devolved nations via health committees. This will allow us to promote the work of the Scientific, Technical and Therapy Group to the wider union and to better protect our members against current threats such as downbanding, outsourcing and privatisation.

Modernising scientific careers – new guidance available

Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC), a programme which was established in 2008, have recently published new guidance. The programme was set up to ensure that the education and training of the healthcare and science workforce was coherent and consistent across different scientific specialisms, as well as with other healthcare professionals.

The guidance was developed in partnership with Health Education England (HEE) and the NHS Employers organisations with input from UNISON.

“Modernising Scientific Careers – explaining the facts” is a resource for the existing NHS healthcare science community, those currently on training programmes and individuals considering a career in healthcare science. It also reflects the changes to the NHS structures in 2013 as the programme now sits within Health Education England. The guidance makes reference to safeguards that should apply if your department undergoes a restructuring exercise.

Work is underway to review some healthcare science AfC profiles to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose. Discussions are taking place with trade unions and the NHS Job Evaluation Group, and initial work will involve updating the existing profile labels so they reflect the updated MSC terminology.

The changes to the profile labels will not affect your AfC band as this is linked to your job description.

Any restructuring changes as a result of re-profiling must be done according to local employer’s organisational change policies with full engagement of staff and union representatives in line with Annex X of Agenda for Change (England only). You can see the document in full at http://www.nhsemployers.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/ExplainingTheFacts_Br0935_6a%20as280114.pdf

Annex X

Annex X of the NHS terms and conditions agreement was part of the agreed changes to Agenda for Change that came into effect in April 2013. It is intended to support organisations undertaking workforce re-profiling and was negotiated through the Staff Council as a set of principles to be followed at a local level when workforce profiling is proposed.

These principles highlight the importance of local engagement and consultation and the need to follow the principles and procedures as set out in the Job Evaluation Handbook (or appropriate systems for staff outside the Agenda for Change groups). This is to prevent staff from being asked to carry out their present jobs but on a lower grade.

The intention is that Annex X should encourage pre-planned partnership working and take into consideration staff and service users’ views.

Our guidance has been developed to give activists and members practical ways to respond to proposals and take challenges against changes which would damage services or leave staff operating unsafely. It also covers actions which can be taken in advance of any proposals being made by your employer so download your copy today at http://www.unison.org.uk/guide-to-agenda-for-change-re-profiling

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:

Join us online at joinunison.org
Call us on 0800 171 2193
Ask your UNISON rep for an application form

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