

## **A JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE DHSSPS, HPSS EMPLOYERS AND TRADE UNIONS**

Dear Colleague

### **AGENDA FOR CHANGE IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Agenda for Change, which was designed among other things to introduce a new pay, grading and terms and conditions for all NHS & HPSS staff employed on Whitley terms and conditions of employment, has still to be finally agreed, with some unions expected to hold a final ballot of their members around September/October 2004.

The Agenda for Change Joint Working Group, involving representatives of the DHSS&PS, the health service employers and the trade unions, have been meeting on a regular basis to consider how Agenda for Change should be implemented if there is an agreement to proceed following these final ballots.

A number of measures were agreed at the meeting of the Joint Working Group held on 13 February 2004 to ensure continued progress was sustained on implementation issues. Importantly it was agreed to develop operating principles within which the Joint Working Group will function, and to ensure that all measures taken to prepare for implementation of Agenda for Change in Northern Ireland are taken jointly on a partnership basis. One of the key components of the implementation plan entails the matching of jobs in Northern Ireland to National Job Profiles. It is essential that the processes adopted in this matching exercise are fair, equitable and sufficiently robust and have the confidence of all parties involved, including all staff.

To take this matter forward, it has been agreed that as part of an initial exercise, a small number of jobs will be selected to test the process of matching. This exercise will solely be to identify the types of information needed to inform the matching process. This will include job descriptions, personnel specifications and other relevant material that would be required to ensure that the matching process is as thorough as possible. Following this exercise it is planned to finalise the procedures that would govern how the matching process will work in Northern Ireland.

Further consideration is also being given to how the matching process should generally be taken forward. Our current position is that Panels are appointed on a Northern Ireland-wide basis to carry out matching. To assist this process, consideration is being given to selecting a number of Trusts where test or shadow matching would proceed.

It is important to note that there will be no actual move to Agenda for Change pay scales earlier than 1 October 2004 as a result of this exercise.

We hope this communication is helpful and we will ensure that further information is communicated to you as our plans progress.

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