

Independent Review of Agenda for Change

7 February 2008

Edwina Hart, Minister for Health and Social Services

The Minister for Health & Social Services has announced today her acceptance of the David Jenkins' report on the review of the implementation and outcomes of Agenda for Change in Wales. David Jenkins, the former Wales TUC General Director, was commissioned to report on

whether Agenda for Change has been implemented consistently on an equitable and fair basis for all staff within NHS Wales and

whether the outcomes of Agenda for Change Job Evaluation and Job Matching are consistent across NHS Wales.

The report has been accepted on the basis that further work will now be undertaken on its recommendations, in partnership with the NHS Trade Unions via the Partnership Forum Agenda for Change Implementation Sub-Group.

The review was undertaken on the basis of detailed discussions with a cross section of interests within the NHS in Wales. These have included discussions with representatives from Trusts, LHBs, Welsh Assembly Government Officials, staff unions and professional bodies.

The implementation of Agenda for Change in Wales commenced following the publication of the national agreement in December 2004. It was undertaken as a partnership exercise within the remit of the NHS Wales Partnership Forum, with NHS staff organisations fully engaged in the process. The responsibility for implementation rested as the agreement required with the Trusts and LHBs and the report considers that broadly speaking this has occurred in a consistent manner, albeit that organisations have been working to different timetables.

The report recognises that the implementation would have benefited from a stronger sense of strategic direction at an all Wales level and this is the subject of one of its main recommendations.

Other key recommendations are -

that any future job evaluation exercise in NHS Wales which affects more than one employer should be strategically managed at an all Wales level and that priority should be given to achieving transparent outcome consistency. This is supported by the Partnership Forum Sub-Group.

pay protection arrangements in NHS Wales should be amended retrospectively with the purpose of ensuring that no member of staff within NHS Wales receives a reduction in their total pay at the date of their assimilation. Again this is supported by the Sub-Group, who will do further work to clarify exactly how this will work in practice.

the report proposes ways of dealing with the issue of 'leapfrogging', which has been a cause of significant discontent, whereby junior members of staff end up being paid at a higher pay point than a more senior colleague. Options for practical solutions will continue to be explored in the Sub Group.

that consideration be given to establishing an NHS Wales Job Evaluation Unit, with responsibility for supporting Trusts and LHBs in the completion of their Agenda for Change assimilations and providing thereafter a central job evaluation service to the NHS in Wales. The Sub-Group supports this and will develop proposals by the end of March, with a view to new arrangements being in place by the end of the calendar year;

it is proposed that a Wales appeal mechanism be constituted, to hear appeals resulting from Agenda for Change job evaluations and job matches, which are initiated by either a

recognised staff organisation or by the relevant employer which relate to whole work groups, work sectors or professional groups.

The report and the implications of its recommendations, including the cost and equality implications, will continue to be considered by the Partnership Forum. I will report further to Assembly members in due course. The Review Report has been circulated to all Members.