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GPC

General Practitioners
Committee

Focus on agenda for change and practice staff

Guidance for GPs

BMA 

Focus on agenda for change and practice staff

This guidance gives an overview of the aims of Agenda for Change and the implications for GP practices. It also sets out the action that LMCs and practices may wish to take.

What is Agenda for Change?

Agenda for Change is a new NHS pay and terms and conditions system that applies to all directly employed NHS staff, except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers at or just below board level. It has been implemented since December 2004, with the expectation by the Health Department that all such staff will be transferred to the new arrangements by September 2005. The new pay arrangements are being backdated to 1 October 2004.

One of the aims of Agenda for Change (AfC) is fair pay. It is based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The reform is underpinned by a job evaluation scheme specifically designed for the NHS, with staff paid on the basis of the jobs they are doing and the skills and knowledge they apply to these jobs.

Details of the NHS job evaluation scheme can be found at:

www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HumanResourcesAndTraining/ModernisingPay/AgendaForChange/fs/en

The AfC has a single pay spine which is divided into nine pay bands. There are several pay points within each band. Job posts are allocated to a pay band using the new NHS job evaluation scheme by either matching the post to an appropriate national profile or by local job evaluation. The new pay structure brings together jobs with a similar job evaluation score into common pay bands.

NHS staff can progress within each band and will normally progress through one pay point each year, up to the maximum in the pay band. At two defined “gateway” points in each pay band, progression will be based on demonstrating the agreed knowledge and skills appropriate to that part of the pay band using the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) which can be found at:

www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/08/61/04090861.pdf

Table 1: Pay bands, job evaluation points and range from 1 April 2005

Band	Job Evaluation pay points	Pay range
1	0 – 160	£11,494 to £12,539
2	161 – 215	£11,494 to £14,739
3	216 – 270	£12,044 to £16,389
4	271 – 325	£13,914 to £19,248
5	326 – 395	£16,389 to £24,198
6	396 – 465	£19,523 to £30,247
7	466 – 539	£22,768 to £35,527
8 (range A)	540 – 584	£31,127 to £41,246
8 (range B)	585 – 629	£35,527 to £49,496
8 (range C)	630 – 674	£41,246 to £59,395
8 (range D)	675 – 720	£49,496 to £71,494
9	721 - 765	£59,395 to £86,240

These pay rates are based on staff working 37.5 hours a week, excluding meal breaks and receiving the following entitlement to annual leave:

<u>Length of service</u>	<u>Annual leave + general public holidays</u>
On appointment	27 days + 8 days
After 5 years' service	29 days + 8 days
After 10 years' service	33 days + 8 days

As well as pay bands, another part of AfC is standardised terms and conditions. This includes the above annual leave entitlements, as well as recognition of previous NHS services for maternity and sick leave pay and redundancy purposes.

The implications for general practice

GP practices are not generally obliged, as independent contractors, to implement Agenda for Change and the new pay rates for their practice staff. The two exceptions to this rule are:

- where a PMS practice has previously agreed to this in its contract with the PCO
- where a member of staff's contract specifically states that they will receive AfC pay and/or terms and conditions. In addition, if the contract says that the member of staff will be paid according to national terms and conditions, then this may be regarded implicitly as referring to AfC if it is accepted that AfC is recognisable as the national terms and conditions. To eliminate any confusion employment contracts should be explicit and should specify where AfC does not apply.

While they may not be required to do so, GP practices may still choose to use the AfC guidelines (after consultation with their staff), particularly when deciding on staff pay rises, as a recruitment and retention tool and/or to motivate staff.

Funding for practices

The GPC fully recognises the GP practice staff funding issues arising from Agenda for Change. The Department of Health has argued that doctors have had adequate resources for AfC included in the new GMS and PMS contracts. The GPC strongly contests this view.

When the nGMS contract was being negotiated we repeatedly asked for additional funding for 2004-06 AfC increases. The Health Department has always claimed that this funding was factored into the global sum price. However, because money was taken out of the global sum to help fund the Quality and Outcomes Framework, this negated the impact.

We are not aware of any money having been made available nationally for AfC in PMS, and continue to raise this with the Health Department.

The GPC negotiators are trying to ensure that appropriate levels of funding for practice staff are properly factored into the review of nGMS funding and PCO-administered funds for 2006 and beyond. The only option before then is for practices to try to seek extra funds from the PCO via the PCO-administered stream, although we recognise that most PCOs will argue that they are not in a position to do this.

Joint letter by the GPC and RCN

In November 2004 the GPC and RCN issued a joint letter to GP practices. This highlighted that practices have the choice on whether or not they implement AfC, while at the same time noting that the benefits of doing so in terms of recruiting and retaining experienced nurses into general practice should be seriously considered. This joint letter can be found at www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/lettergpcrcn1104

Benefits of implementing AfC

Many practices are currently experiencing difficulties in recruiting appropriately skilled and knowledgeable practice nurses. In the near future the recruitment and retention of experienced nurses into general practice may prove to be challenging as a result of demographic trends. The nursing population as a whole is ageing, but practice nurses in particular have an older profile with 46% of practice nurses currently over the age of 45. It will therefore be essential to recruit and retain nurses of all ages if a staffing crisis is to be avoided. A key element to solving this problem will be to provide practice nurses with a pay, conditions and career package which is competitive with their NHS colleagues.

Similarly, in order to recruit and retain other experienced and valued practice staff (such as practice managers and receptionists) who may be tempted to work elsewhere in the NHS or for a private organisation, the pay and conditions offered to these staff should be competitive.

Practices may want, regardless of AfC, to consider the type of roles that it needs staff to undertake, and the knowledge and skills needed in the practice team. For example, a practice may decide that certain tasks could be undertaken by an experienced practice nurse and also look at ways of developing its staff to allow them to have more responsibility. While there may be increased costs associated with AfC, these should be weighed against the benefits of retaining skilled and knowledgeable staff who can undertake specific tasks, contribute to delivering the Quality and Outcomes Framework successfully, and therefore help to increase the practice's overall income.

It should be noted that using AfC will not necessarily result in an immediate pay increase for practice staff. The job evaluation exercise may reveal that staff are already paid above the recommended point in their band or paid above their AfC band. It will depend, of course, on how your staff currently are rewarded.

Costs of implementing AfC

Practices should consider the following:

1. The likely immediate costs to the practice of using the AfC pay bands for all existing and new practice staff, including the superannuation and taxation implications.
2. The terms and conditions changes, in particular the implications of recognising previous NHS service on maternity and sick leave pay and redundancy payments.
3. The time involved in evaluating job descriptions (especially if these cannot be agreed), and the process for changing a job description.
4. The time involved in formulating the NHS knowledge and skills framework (KSF).

Job profiles and job evaluation for practice staff

The Department of Health's Agenda for Change team has developed national job profiles for practice nurses, practice managers and GP receptionists (see appendix).

The RCN has also produced a model job profile for practice nurses which can be found at www.rcn.org.uk/agendaforchange/payconditions/jobprofile/. The RCN estimate that the majority of practice nurses will fall within band 6 of the new pay system, but that there may be some practice nurses that fall within bands 5 or 7. The BMA's Health Policy and Economic Research Unit (HPERU) have estimated that this could result in a pay uplift of about 2.5% nationally and nearly 8% in inner London.

We are currently awaiting confirmation from the DH's workforce directorate on how practices can formally evaluate the jobs that their staff are undertaking. It is likely that the evaluation exercise will require several practices in a region to agree to take part in this process as well as PCO involvement and support. The GPC is working with the DH to ensure that, for those practices who wish to take part, the process is clear and properly supported.

What action can LMCs take?

It would be helpful if LMCs could draw this guidance to the attention of their local GP practices and then to gauge their views on AfC.

To encourage practices' interest in and implementation of AfC, LMCs might also wish to work jointly with their PCOs and SHAs to secure the resources and expertise needed to enable the required job evaluations to be carried out. Where such discussions are positive, please could you report this to the GPC office.

What action can practices take?

Taking into account all the points above, if practices wish to consider realigning pay and terms and conditions with AfC then, in the first instance, they should look at the details on the websites and discuss this with their LMC. If they wish to make this more official, then they can contact their PCO to register their interest. Practices must also consult their staff on possible changes, particularly as any change to their contract (particularly those concerning their salary and terms of employment) must be with their agreement.

If practices do not wish to undertake a job evaluation or use the AfC pay and terms and conditions, then they may want to consider other ways of recruiting and retaining staff. For example when setting pay, practices should consider local market forces both in the NHS and in the private arena, and may want to use the AfC payscale as a general guideline. In addition, we are aware that some practices have used some of the payments arising from their QOF achievements to reward staff for their work in this area. Again, of course, there is no obligation on practices to do this.

Further information

BMA members may contact AskBMA (email: askbma@bma.org.uk; telephone 0870 6060828) for employment advice, and in particular before changing contractual terms and conditions for staff.

DH National Job Profiles: Practice Staff

Profile Title	Band	Sub-job family	Page
Clerical Officer (Reception)	2	AS-PS	2
Clerical Officer (Data Entry)	2	AS-PS	3
Nurse (GP Practice)	5	NM-CS	4
Practice Manager (Small Practice)	5	AS-PS	5
Nurse Specialist (GP Practice)	6	NM-CS	6
Practice Manager (Group Practice)	6	AS-PS	7

Job Title: Clerical Officer (Reception)
Job Statement: 1 Provides reception service in designated areas
 2 Records patient information area and makes appointments

Factor	Relevant Job Information	JE Level
1. Communication & Relationship Skills	Provide and receive routine information requiring tact or persuasive skills; barriers to understanding Communicates tactfully with patients, staff about appointments, deals with enquiries where there may be barriers to understanding	3 (a)
2. Knowledge, Training & Experience	Range of routine work procedures requiring job training Knowledge of patient administrative system, knowledge of hospital departments & clerical procedures, acquired through job training	2
3. Analytical & Judgemental Skills	Judgements involving facts or situations, some requiring analysis Resolving issues relating to e.g. appointment issues	2
4. Planning & Organisational Skills	Organise own day to day work tasks or activities/ plan and organise straightforward activities, some ongoing Organises own work load/ co-ordinates and adjusts ongoing clinic appointments	1-2
5. Physical Skills	Physical skills obtained through practice Standard keyboard skills, manoeuvring trolleys with case notes	2
6. Responsibility for Patient/Client Care	Provide non-clinical advice, information to patients/clients/relatives Provides advice and information to patients	2
7. Responsibility for Policy/Service Development	Follows policies in own role, may be required to comment Follows departmental policies	1
8. Responsibility for Financial & Physical Resources	Personal duty of care in relation to equipment, resources/ Maintain stock control Careful use of office equipment/ maintain department's stationery stock	1/2 (c)
9. Responsibility for Human Resources	Demonstrates own activities to new or less experienced employees Demonstrates activities to new starters	1
10. Responsibility for Information Resources	Data entry, text processing, storage of data Process and store patient information	2 (a)
11. Responsibility for Research & Development	Undertakes surveys or audits, as necessary to own work Completes e.g. staff surveys	1
12. Freedom to Act	Standard operating procedures, someone available for reference Uses initiative, advice available	2
13. Physical Effort	Frequent light effort for short periods/ Occasional moderate effort for several short periods Moves case notes	2 (b)/ 2 (d)
14. Mental Effort	Frequent concentration; work pattern predictable Concentration required for taking patient details	2 (a)
15. Emotional Effort	Occasional/frequent distressing or emotional circumstances Deals with distressed patients, bereaved relatives	2-3
16. Working Conditions	Occasional/frequent unpleasant conditions/ occasional highly unpleasant conditions/ some exposure to hazards Occasional/frequent verbal, physical aggression	2(a)/3(a)/4(a)
JE Score Band	JE Score 175 –209	Band 2

Job Title: Clerical Officer (Data Entry)
Job Statement: 1 Enters patient/client records in to patient information systems
 2 Generates standard reports

Factor	Relevant Job Information	JE Level
1. Communication & Relationship Skills	Provide and receive routine information, to inform work colleagues, patients, clients Checks with clerical and administrative staff the accuracy of patient information	2
2. Knowledge, Training & Experience	Range of routine work procedures requiring job training Knowledge of data coding and input procedures acquired through job training	2
3. Analytical & Judgemental Skills	Judgements involving facts or situations, some requiring analysis Solves problems relating to patient records, checks for accuracy	2
4. Planning & Organisational Skills	Organise own day to day work tasks or activities Prioritises own work	1
5. Physical Skills	Physical skills obtained through practice/ Developed physical skills; advanced keyboard use Input patient/client information into computer	2-3(a)
6. Responsibility for Patient/Client Care	Assist patients/clients during incidental contacts/ provides non-clinical advice, information to patients/clients/relatives Incidental patient/ client contact/ provides advice e.g. on appointments	1-2
7. Responsibility for Policy/Service Development	Follows policies in own role, may be required to comment Follows departmental policies	1
8. Responsibility for Financial & Physical Resources	Personal duty of care in relation to equipment, resources Careful use of office equipment	1
9. Responsibility for Human Resources	Demonstrate own activities to new or less experienced employees Demonstrates own tasks to new starters	1
10. Responsibility for Information Resources	Data entry, text processing, storage of data Process patient/client records; generate standard reports	2 (a)
11. Responsibility for Research & Development	Undertake surveys or audits, as necessary to own work Completes e.g. staff surveys	1
12. Freedom to Act	Standard operating procedures, someone available for reference Works within standard data entry procedures	2
13. Physical Effort	Frequent sitting or standing in a restricted position Inputting into computer for a substantial proportion of working time	2(a)
14. Mental Effort	Frequent requirement for prolonged concentration Prolonged concentration is required when inputting into computer; need to ensure accuracy	4(a)
15. Emotional Effort	Occasional indirect exposure to distressing or emotional circumstances Inputs distressing case notes	1(b)
16. Working Conditions	Use VDU equipment more or less continuously Uses computer for most of working day	2(e)
JE Score/Band	JE Score 166 – 183	Band 2

Profile label:

Nurse (GP Practice)

Job Statement:

1. Delivers nursing care, including running clinics
2. Provides health promotion advice
3. Carries out immunisations and smear tests

Factor	Relevant Job Information	JE Level
1.Communication & Relationship Skills	Provide and receive complex and sensitive information; barriers to understanding; persuasive, motivational, negotiating, training skills are required Communicates sensitive condition related information to patients, relatives, requiring empathy, reassurance	4(a)
2.Knowledge, Training & Experience	Expertise within a specialism underpinned by theory Professional knowledge acquired through training to degree/ diploma level	5
3.Analytical & Judgemental Skills	Range of facts or situations, requiring analysis Judgements on problems requiring investigation, analysis e.g. assessment of patient condition	3
4.Planning & Organisational Skills	Plan and organise straightforward activities, some ongoing Organise clinics	2
5.Physical Skills	Highly developed physical skills, accuracy important; manipulation of fine tools, materials Dexterity and accuracy required for e.g. Intravenous injections, syringe pumps and infusions	3(b)
6.Responsibility for Patient/Client Care	Develops programmes of care, care packages Assesses, plans, implements & evaluates clinical care of patients	5(a)
7.Responsibility for Policy/Service Development	Follow policies in own role, may be required to comment Professionally responsible for adherence to policies and procedures	1
8.Responsibility for Financial & Physical Resources	Maintain stock control Responsible for ordering supplies	2(c)
9.Responsibility for Human Resources	Demonstrate own activities to new or less experienced employees / professional/ clinical supervision Demonstrate own duties/ supervise students	1-2(b)
10.Responsibility for Information Resources	Record personally generated information Updates client records	1
11.Responsibility for Research & Development	Undertake surveys or audits, as necessary to own work; regularly undertake R & D activity; clinical trials Occasionally participates in R&D activity /undertakes R & D activity; clinical trials	1-2 (a) (b)
12.Freedom to Act	Clearly defined occupational procedures, someone available close by Works within codes of practice & professional guidelines	3
13.Physical Effort	Combination of sitting, standing, walking/ frequent light effort for several short periods Light physical effort/ Push lightweight trolleys	1-2 (b)
14.Mental Effort	Frequent concentration, work pattern predictable Concentration for implementing care plans, taking smear tests, analysing ECG printout	2 (a)
15.Emotional Effort	Occasional / frequent distressing or emotional circumstances Care of the terminally ill, care of distressed patients	2(a)-3 (a)
16.Working Conditions	Frequent unpleasant conditions; occasional /frequent highly unpleasant conditions Body odours/ Body fluids, infectious material	3 (a)/ 3 (b)/ 4 (b)
JE Score/Band	JE Score: 336-367	Band 5

JOB TITLE: PRACTICE MANAGER (SMALL PRACTICE)

JOB STATEMENT:

1. To manage non clinical aspects of a medical practice and the practice staff
2. To ensure the practice operates as an effective organisation

Factor	Relevant Job Information	JE level
1.Communication & Relationship Skills	Complex information, requires negotiating, persuasive skills tact and diplomacy Negotiates on behalf of Practice for budgets and with suppliers; Communicates re. staff issues & patient complaints	4
2.Knowledge, Training & Experience	A range of non routine work procedures & practices Diploma level knowledge required (12-18 months study) + detailed knowledge of range of legislative requirements	4
3.Analytical & Judgemental Skills	A range of facts & situations which require analysis & comparison of a range of options Judgements on a variety of staff & administrative problems	3
4.Planning & Organisational Skills	Number of complex activities which, require formulation & adjustment of plans Administrative & business planning, staff planning.	3
5.Physical Skills	Standard keyboard skills	2
6.Responsibility for Patient/Client Care	Provides general non-clinical advice Informing patients of new initiatives/clinics/legislation	2
7.Responsibility for Policy/Service Development	Implements policies within determined parameters Implements changes to working practices following approval	2
8.Responsibility for Financial & Physical Resources	Authorised signatory for cash/financial payments; Procurement of equipment & supplies Authorised signatory; procures some/all clinical & office equipment for Practice;	3(a) (b) / 4(c)
9.Responsibility for Human Resources	Responsible for day to day management of a group of staff Responsible for discipline, workload planning & appraisals	3(a)
10.Responsibility for Information Resources	Responsible for adapting information systems to meet the specifications of others Responsible for introducing & adapting computer systems and new software, also information security	4
11.Responsibility for Research & Development	Undertakes surveys/audits	1
12.Freedom to Act	Guided by principles & broad occupational policies which may need interpretation Works within Codes of Practice, occupational standards & policies & procedures	4
13.Physical Effort	A combination of sitting, standing & walking with little requirement for physical effort	1
14.Mental Effort	Frequent concentration, unpredictable work Concentration during report writing & business planning	3(a)
15.Emotional Effort	Exposure to distressing circumstances is rare	1
16.Working Conditions	Exposure to unpleasant working conditions is rare	1
JE Score/Band	JE Score 336-347	Band 5

Profile label:

Nurse Specialist (GP Practice)

Job Statement:

1. Delivers nursing care, including running specialist clinics
2. Provides Health Education
3. Carries out immunisations and smear tests

Factor	Relevant Job Information	JE Level
1.Communication & Relationship Skills	Provide and receive complex and sensitive information; barriers to understanding; persuasive, motivational, negotiating, training skills required Communicates sensitive condition related information to patients, relatives, requiring empathy, reassurance	4(a)
2.Knowledge, Training & Experience	Specialist knowledge across range of procedures underpinned by theory Professional knowledge acquired through degree/ diploma, supplemented by diploma level specialist training, experience, short courses	6
3.Analytical & Judgemental Skills	Complex facts or situations requiring comparison of a range of options Skills for assessing and interpreting specialist clinical conditions	4
4.Planning & Organisational Skills	Plan and organise straightforward activities, some ongoing Organises clinics	2
5.Physical Skills	Developed physical skills, accuracy important; manipulation of fine tools, materials Dexterity and accuracy required for e.g. Intravenous injections, syringe pumps and infusion pumps	3(b)
6.Responsibility for Patient/Client Care	Develop programmes of care/ care packages; provide specialist advice concerning care Assesses, plans, implements & evaluates clinical care of patients; provides advice on specialist conditions e.g. diabetes	5(a) (c)
7.Responsibility for Policy/Service Development	Implement policies and propose changes to practices, procedures for own area Implements clinical policies; readjusts protocols to meet need	2
8.Responsibility for Financial & Physical Resources	Maintain security of stock Orders supplies	2(c)
9.Responsibility for Human Resources	Professional/ clinical supervision Supervises students	2(b)
10.Responsibility for Information Resources	Record personally generated information Updates client records	1
11.Responsibility for Research & Development	Undertake surveys or audits, as necessary to own work/ regularly undertake R & D activity/ clinical trials Occasionally participates in R&D activity /undertakes R & D activity; clinical trials	1- 2(a)/2 p(b)
12.Freedom to Act	Clearly defined occupational policies, work is managed, rather than supervised/ broad occupational policies Accountable for own professional actions, not directly supervised/lead specialist	3-4
13.Physical Effort	Combination of sitting, standing, walking/ frequent light effort for several short periods Light physical effort/ Push lightweight trolleys	1-2(b)
14.Mental Effort	Frequent concentration, work pattern predictable Concentration for implementing care plans, taking tests	2(a)
15.Emotional Effort	Occasional/ frequent distressing or emotional circumstances Care of the terminally ill; care of distressed patients	2(a)- 3(a)
16.Working Conditions	Frequent unpleasant conditions; occasional/ frequent highly unpleasant conditions Body odours/ body fluids, infectious material	3(a)(b) 4(b)
JE Score/Band	JE Score: 401-436	Band 6

Job Title:

Practice Manager (Group Practice)

Job Statement:

1. Manages non-clinical aspects of group medical practice and practice staff.
2. Ensures the practice operates as an effective organisation.
3. Develops, monitors and maintains business initiatives
4. Develops non-clinical policies, practices and procedures

Factor	Relevant Job Information	JE Level
1.Communication & Relationship Skills	Communicates complex information requiring negotiating, persuasive skills Negotiates with PCT on services to be provided by practice; advises partners & staff on external initiatives	4(a)
2.Knowledge, Training & Experience	Expertise within specialism underpinned by theoretical knowledge or practical experience Knowledge of admin/ business management policies, procedures, practices: acquired through degree level education, professional qualification or equivalent	5
3.Analytical & Judgemental Skills	Complex facts or situations requiring analysis, interpretation, comparison of options Practice contract decisions, management issues, how to deal with complaints, implement national regulations, policies	4
4.Planning & Organisational Skills	Complex activities requiring formulation, adjustments Administrative & business planning, staff planning, seminars, co-ordination with other agencies	3
5.Physical Skills	Skills obtained through practice Standard keyboard, driving skills	2
6.Responsibility for Patient/Client Care	Provides general non-clinical advice Informs patients of new initiatives/ services	2
7.Responsibility for Policy/Service Development	Implements policies, proposes changes to policies, impact beyond own area Responsible for implementing policies, government initiatives; develops policies with impact on clinical staff & other agencies e.g. risk management, health & safety	3
8.Responsibility for Financial & Physical Resources	Budget setting for service; procurement of all supplies for service Responsible for budget setting for practice; procurement of equipment & supplies	4 (b) (c)
9.Responsibility for Human Resources	Day to day management/ line manager for service Allocates work, supervises, recruits, provides training for practice non-clinical staff/ line manager for admin staff, including workload planning	3(a)/ 4(a)
10.Responsibility for Information Resources	Responsible for adapting information systems to meet specifications of others Responsible for introduction, adaptation, maintenance of computer systems	4(a)
11.Responsibility for Research & Development	Undertakes surveys/audits Undertakes patient surveys, audit review of patients	1
12.Freedom to Act	Broad occupational policies Lead for non-clinical business/ administration; manages non-clinical aspects of practice	4
13.Physical Effort	Combination of sitting, standing, walking	1
14.Mental Effort	Frequent concentration, unpredictable work Concentration for business plans, reports, stats; frequent interruptions	3(a)
15.Emotional E	Occasional exposure to distressing circumstances Patient complaints, staffing issues	2
16.Working Conditions	Exposure to unpleasant conditions is rare/occasional Verbal aggression from patients	1-2
JE Score/Band	JE Score: 409-424	Band 6