WE ARE ONE NHS
#saveourNHS

Defend national pay –
Save Agenda for Change
You do extraordinary things every day for the NHS. Your commitment and hard work are what makes the NHS what it is and why everyone who relies on it, cherishes it. People work for the NHS because they care. They want to make patients well and to help people lead better, longer and healthier lives.

However, over the last two years, this unique ethos of our NHS has been eroded by this government.

- It dramatically cut the finances of the NHS by £20bn – and plans to cut more, leading to job losses and service cuts.
- It passed the Health and Social Care Act in England, causing a massive, unnecessary and costly reorganisation of the NHS leading to wholesale fragmentation and privatisation of large swathes of the NHS.
- It has cut back NHS services, closed wards and made many 1000s of health workers redundant.
- It is scaling back regulation, making the service less safe, but cheaper to sell.
- Now it is attacking your terms and conditions both at a local level and through cuts to Agenda for Change nationally for staff in England and potentially across the four nations in the future, if agreed by respective governments.

Agenda for Change was agreed jointly with employers in 2004 to create national pay and conditions across the NHS, while also eradicating discrimination in the pay system. It is probably the largest equality proofed pay system in the world and has benefited and protected NHS staff.

Now the NHS employers want to undermine national pay and cut Agenda for Change. The proposals will not only have huge implications for you, but will impact patient safety. In short, your trust boards and well paid chief execs want to cut your terms and conditions to make you cheap and ‘competitive’ in a market which is all about selling off the NHS.

*We’re committed to high quality patient care – but it’s much harder when staff are demoralised, overworked, and getting our pay cut. All in it together? I don’t think so! We have to stop these pay cuts, and the constant Tory attacks on the NHS.*

Gemma Price, Band 5 Speech and Language Therapist
No one joined the NHS to have to fight for services, jobs, and terms and conditions, and you did not create a financial crisis through casino banking, but the simple fact is, if we don’t resist the proposed changes on the table nationally and locally now, then your NHS employers will come back to take more. Staff morale will plummet and patients and services will suffer. Private companies, now bidding for the NHS because of the Health and Social Care Act, are rubbing their hands at the prospect of making even greater profit out of the NHS. Cutting your terms makes you easier to sell to the private sector.

**Our history has taught us that when people stand up together in defence of their services, their jobs, their terms and conditions, united in purpose, they make a difference.**

Now is that time. We need you to organise, work together and fight together. Never has there been a more urgent time in the NHS for courage and unity.

*We need you to act now. If you don’t, who will?*

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**Your terms and conditions – cut over the last two years**

**Pay cuts in real terms**
The government has imposed two years of pay freezes and is looking to continue this pay restraint which could lead to a real terms 10% cut in pay for NHS staff due to the rate of inflation. It is also considering introducing regional or zonal (area) pay.

**Increased pension contributions**
The Government has now imposed changes to your pension scheme. This means you will be paying more to work longer and get less in retirement. We have only seen one year of a three-year pension contribution increase to date. We continue to fight against working until you are 68. Unite did not sign up to the pensions’ ‘Heads of Agreement’ and has continued to oppose changes to your pension.

**Recruitment and retention premia cut**
Unite members in Estates, Maintenance and Chaplaincy services will lose around 16% of their income with the cut to the National Recruitment and Retention Premium over a two year period.

**On call allowances cut**
Changes to on call allowances are affecting many NHS professions. The new on-call arrangements mean that some of you could see 25% to 30% of your income cut from these changes alone.
I haven’t had a pay rise for 2 years, they have taken away my recruitment and retention premium, and now they want to take more. We have to say ‘no’ now or else we will be left with really bad terms and conditions.

Jim Bland, Estates, Pilgrim Hospital

Down-banding
Under the guise of ‘departmental reorganisations’ many colleagues are being ‘down-banded’ (down-graded), losing £1,000s in income and professional status.

Altogether many NHS workers have lost around a third or more of their income already. More cuts to terms and conditions, are currently being sought. Some employers are changing terms for new starters, asking people to sign new contracts on worse terms than Agenda for Change, or looking to sack and re-engage whole workforces on worse terms and conditions. If it has not happened to you yet, be warned, it is on its way unless we fight back.

Cuts to staff and services
Many will have noticed cuts to staff, vacancy freezes and loss of management roles. This is having a huge impact on you and your colleagues, as you are pushed to your limits through long hours, overtime, and increased stress. Unsurprisingly this is having a negative impact on the service you provide.

Now they want to cut Agenda for Change
This, apparently, isn’t enough. NHS employers want to cut your terms and conditions further, both nationally and locally by cutting Agenda for Change. A move that will lead to pay cuts and postcode pay.

No to performance related pay
There are currently proposals on the table to move you from an incremental equality proofed pay system, with an obligation on your employer to develop you through a knowledge and skills framework, to a performance related pay system.

This new way of deciding if you should have a pay increase has been widely applied through the private sector, where Unite has a lot of expertise. It will mean that you will be individually assessed every year by your manager on whether or not you deserve a pay increase at every increment of every pay band. Not only does this mean that you might not get any pay increase, but it is expensive to implement.
Performance pay is unfair and divisive. It is a massive distraction that pits colleagues against one another, resulting in low morale and endless appeals. Often it can lead to discrimination claims in employment tribunals since women and black and ethnic minority staff normally come off worst.

The Agenda for Change pay system was put in place to avoid this, which it has largely achieved. However, performance pay provides employers with the opportunity to stop you progressing up the pay scale, allowing them to make financial savings by cutting your pay.

Pay is currently a collective issue. However, performance pay makes it a personal issue, leaving you on your own to fight for your pay increase every year. It moves the responsibility from your employer developing you through the Knowledge and Skills Framework to how they think you do your job. Unite knows that this is not what you want.

As well as using performance criteria, some local employers are also looking to use behavioural criteria as well, like your attendance.

**No to the removal of preceptorship**

When Agenda for Change was introduced, it was recognised that those coming in at Band 5 were being paid below the market rate, so staff are currently able to move through the first two increment points in one year. The case for preceptorship remains, but the NHS Employers want to remove this. We must remember that the top of each pay band is the market rate for the job. The incremental scale moves you towards this rate for the job as you gain more experience in your work over the years.

**No to discretionary points**

Providing you pass through the second gateway at the top of the current scale in each pay band, you will receive additional incremental points until you reach the top of the pay band. The NHS Employers are proposing that those on Bands 8c, 8d and 9, have to exceed tight performance criteria. It will be a matter of discretion as to whether or not they believe you deserve a ‘discretionary point’. This will be judged on an annual basis. You could lose your pay the following year. Those currently at the top of their band will be protected.

Often employers make the bar higher and higher to get discretionary points. The system is also highly discriminatory.

**AFC is a national agreement, if we let employers initiate local T&C’s and break away from this, then we will make it easier for employers to drive down the quality of terms and conditions.**

Ruth Greene, biomedical scientist, Tameside Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

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**SAVE the NHS**

You need the NHS now it needs YOU!
We are ONE NHS

**No to spot salaries**
For staff on Bands 8c, 8d and 9, NHS Employers want local Trusts to have the flexibility to move you onto ‘spot salaries’. This is a fixed pay point. Again, highly discriminatory, pay progression becomes impossible. This, in effect, cuts you loose from Agenda for Change.

**No to cuts in unsocial hours and sickness allowances**
If you work unsocial hours, you receive unsocial hours payments under Agenda for Change. NHS Employers want to take away these payments if you are off sick. This will result in you getting less income if you are sick, causing financial difficulties for some. Most colleagues are off sick due to a work-related illness or a disability, disease or other illness.

If you are on pay spine points 1 – 8 (not Bands 1 – 8) or have a work-related injury or poor health, the NHS employers are proposing that you may be exempt, however there are poor definitions around this.

Unite believes that NHS Trusts should manage sickness absence effectively, rather than penalise you, and use the new guidance produced by the Staff Council to assist this.

The reality will be that many of you will simply turn up to work ill, where able, and then pass on infection, or work with a low productivity. This is unsafe for you, unsafe for the colleagues and unsafe for patients.

**No to workforce re-profiling**
The NHS Employers are proposing that there has to be engagement with trade unions and the processes set out in the NHS Job Evaluation Handbook used when there is re-organisation and ‘downbanding’. Unite has already established this principle at an Employment Tribunal, so this it not giving us anything extra.

**No to cuts locally**
Locally NHS Trusts are proposing a whole range of additional cuts to your terms and conditions.

On the long list of things that employers want to cut are sick pay, annual leave, increasing the hours people work for no extra pay, and paying for CRB checks. Unite opposes these changes.

Your NHS employer has a choice – to fight to properly fund the NHS or to cut your terms and sell off its services. We believe there is no choice.

If we care about patients, we care about the NHS, we care about our colleagues and care about ourselves, we have to all work together to stop these changes. If we don’t they will come to take away even more.
Take action to defend Agenda for Change

1. Update your details and fill in the survey. We need you to fill in the enclosed survey to ensure that we have all your details up to date so that we can keep you informed of what is happening. We also need to hear your views to help us defend Agenda for Change. It will only take a couple of minutes to complete.

2. Return your survey and membership details in the envelope enclosed. Please return by 17 December 2012 to Unite. It is your terms and conditions, it is important you have your say.

3. Attend a local workplace meeting on Agenda for Change and learn more about what is happening. Keep an eye on the Health Sector pages of the Unite website www.unitetheunion.org/afc for your daily updates.

4. Volunteer to be a rep or contact person at your Trust, we need you to get active if we are to defend Agenda for Change. (Unite will provide training/support for all who volunteer.)

5. Recruit a colleague. At a time like this people need to be in a union that will fight for their terms and conditions. If your colleagues are not in a union they are very vulnerable. Some employers have said that they will consult individually with staff, if they are not in a union they may agree to changes to their terms and conditions. This will weaken your position. For everyone you recruit, we will send you a voucher – please see the Unite website for details.

6. Be prepared to take action. If we do nothing then employers won’t know how angry you are at the way that you, your colleagues and the NHS is being treated. When your rep or Unite calls for action, make it a priority. The more people involved, the more impact it will have.

7. In the new year, we are planning to hold an industrial action ballot. We will be calling for action short of a strike and strike action. We need you to vote in this ballot and to vote YES for both.