

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM

**First meeting: 20th November 2003
9.00 am Congress House**

At the first meeting of the Public Services Forum, the following issues were discussed:

Efficiency Review

Peter Gershon gave a presentation outlining the objectives of the review and the timetable and approach to be adopted for its delivery.

The Forum welcomed the opportunities for workforce reform in public services provided by the Efficiency review. Peter Gershon agreed to meet with TU representatives to further discuss the work.

PSF Guiding Principles and Work Programme

The Forum agreed the proposed guiding principles and work programme for the work of the PSF, indicating that this would include issues of equality and diversity.

Audit of Workforce Involvement

The Work Foundation will be commissioned to carry out an audit of workforce involvement in public services reform. This study will significantly assist the work of the PSF in identifying best practice in this area, in support of the government's reform and delivery agenda. A report on the Audit will be presented to PSF in March.

Public Services Pensions

David Deaton, Head of Public Service Pensions, HM Treasury, led discussion on the raising of the pension age. PSF agreed that it would be beneficial for a further meeting to be held on this issue.

In summary, the Chair welcomed the constructive dialogue and confirmed that:

- **There would be a follow up meeting between Trade Union Representatives and the Efficiency Review Team.**
- **Guiding principles and items to be included in the future work programme were agreed.**
- **PSF would receive an interim report on the workforce involvement audit in March.**
- **There would be a follow up meeting between Trade Union representatives and Treasury officials on the pension age.**

**OPSR
02 December 2003**

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM (PSF):

Meeting Note

Second Meeting : 22 March 2004

3pm Kirkland House, 22 Whitehall

At the second meeting of the Public Services Forum, the following issues were discussed:

A. Budget 2004 / Efficiency Review

1. The Forum discussed the implications of the Budget and Efficiency Review announcements, including the civil service job reductions. In response to concerns raised by the TUC, Douglas Alexander emphasised the Government's commitment to reinvest savings in front line services. He also reiterated the commitment he had given to the CCSU to write to Ministerial colleagues encouraging them to consult with trade unions on the Efficiency Review over the coming months.

B. Work Programme Update

2. The Forum welcomed the PSF follow up on the Efficiency Review, Pensions, Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy, Two-Tier Workforce and Workforce Reform Best Practice Workshops. The TUC stressed the need for progress on the two-tier workforce beyond local government and suggested that there should be a further meeting on pensions ahead of the next PSF.
3. It agreed that there should be a further specialists meeting on pensions with HMT ahead of the next PSF and that the June PSF could provisionally include items on the Audit, Efficiency Review update, recruitment and retention, pay/rewards, pensions and diversity [Note: some items might need to be deferred to allow sufficient time for discussion on each agenda item]

C. Audit of Workforce Involvement

4. Stephen Bevan from the Work Foundation presented the interim findings of the audit being carried out on the involvement of the workforce in public services reform.
5. The Forum agreed that the report would be very useful and looked forward to the final report in June. In the meantime, it was agreed that further work would be carried out on firming up the recommendations and consideration given to the launch of the report.

D. Workforce Flexibility

6. Peter Kane introduced a report setting out how workforce flexibility can benefit both employers and employees by achieving a more flexible service to benefit customers and a better work life balance for employees. It pointed to the need to spread good practice from the NHS (Agenda for Change) and schools to other public services.
7. The Forum agreed that a) the analysis in the paper should be fed into the Audit and b) it would be useful to focus on the contribution that trade unions and employers could make to securing greater workforce flexibility in local government / children's services.

OPSR
March 2004

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM (PSF): 14 JUNE 2004

Meeting Note

2pm Kirkland House, 22 Whitehall

At the third meeting of the Public Services Forum, the following issues were discussed:

A. Work Programme Update

- Peter Kane provided an overview of some of the key issues facing employers and employees in workforce reform. These included equal pay, the children's workforce and pay and rewards reform.
- The Forum recognised the high priority of these issues and confirmed the need for a dialogue on pay and rewards reform and equal pay before the next meeting of PSF. Discussions on equal pay to take place at official level, reporting back to the Chair by the end of July.

B. Efficiency Review

- John Oughton gave a presentation outlining the approach to the implementation of the Efficiency review and invited Trade Union representatives to take an active part in the implementation.
- The Forum welcomed the inclusive approach being taken by John Oughton and his team, including the invitation to the TUC to join the Efficiency Programme Steering Group.

C. Audit of Workforce Involvement

- The Forum endorsed the findings of the Workforce Involvement Audit and its recommendations.
- Further work will be done between the TUC and OPSR on the steps needed to implement the recommendations.

D. Public Service Pension Reform

- David Deaton, Head of Public Service Pensions, HMT gave a presentation of the reforms to public service pensions and Ian Brinkley, TUC, introduced a TUC paper on this issue.
- The Chair confirmed that, in implementing the decision to raise the pension age to 65, there was scope for constructive discussions between employers and unions on recycling some of the savings into improved benefits. The Forum agreed that there should be follow up discussions on improvements in occupational health provision and other ways of encouraging the retention of older workers.

E. Promoting a Positive Image of Public Services as an Aid to Recruitment and Retention

- Peter Kane introduced a paper presenting an outline of a number of recent, high profile recruitment drives in the public services.
- The Forum agreed the recommendations in the paper and looked forward to further discussion.

F. Next Steps

- On the future of the PSF, TUC confirmed that they had found the Forum constructive and had contributed to improved dialogue. The Chair also welcomed the positive nature of the discussions and said that he would be writing to the Prime Minister to agree next steps.

In summary the Chair confirmed that the Forum:

- **Supported the recommendations from the audit of workforce involvement in reform and that the necessary steps for their implementation be considered.**
- **Endorsed an inclusive approach to the implementation of the Efficiency Review.**
- **Recognised the need for continued dialogue on the implementation of pension reforms at a departmental level.**
- **Agreed that officials would scope the opportunities for collaboration on equal pay and pay and rewards.**
- **Would re-visit the issue of the public service image in recruitment and retention in subsequent discussions.**

OPSR
June 2004

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM: 18 OCTOBER 2004

Meeting Note

2pm Kirkland House, 22 Whitehall

At the fourth meeting of the Public Services Forum, the following issues were discussed:

Work Update

Peter Kane (OPSR) provided an overview of some of the key issues facing employers and employees in workforce reform. These included:

The PSF Work Programme

- The forum agreed the proposed work programmed with an increased focus on pensions and equal pay.

Equal Pay

- The forum agreed that further discussions would take place on equal pay before the next full meeting of the PSF.
- Also noted that equal pay is wide ranging issue that is part of the wider equality and diversity agenda with links to the work of the Women in Work Commission.

Two Tier Workforce

- PSF recognised the work that was already taking place on this issue.
- Further discussions will take place with the Government, Trade Unions and the CBI.

SR04/Efficiency review

- PSF noted the constructive discussions taking place through existing processes.

TU and Employee Involvement in Workforce Reform

- The PSF welcomed the work taking forward key recommendations from the "Audit of Trade Union and Employee Involvement in Public Services Reform" and agreed a joint statement endorsing the project and its pilots.

Rewards in the Public Services

- Ian Brinkley (TUC) introduced a paper on the use of rewards in the public services with key conclusions and recommendations.
- Peter Kane presented a short paper on the implementation of a total reward approach to pay in the public services.
- The Forum welcomed the papers as a constructive contribution to the debate on pay and rewards and it was agreed that a dedicated roundtable discussion would take place to consider next steps.

Children's Workforce

- Jeanette Pugh Director of the Children's Workforce Unit in DfES gave a presentation on the far reaching reform of the workforce delivering children's services.
- The forum welcomed the opportunity to discuss this work and stressed the need for co-operation across different services and for partnership working with employees and agreed to consider a joint communication to front line staff.

In summary the Forum:

- **Endorsed the work programme, subject to increased focus on equal pay and pensions.**
- **Agreed to further consideration of pensions / retirement issues before the next meeting of PSF.**
- **Agreed that further discussions would take place on two tier workforce, which would include CBI.**
- **Agreed that a further dedicated roundtable discussion would take place on pay, including equal pay.**

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM: 28 FEBRUARY 2005

Action Note

Kirkland House, 22 Whitehall

At the fifth meeting of the Public Services Forum, chaired by David Miliband, on the 28 February 2005, the following issues were discussed and actions agreed:

Future Work of PSF

- **Five Year Vision:** agreed TUC and employers each to set out vision for their role in public service and workforce reform and future of PSF to next meeting in June
- **Diversity:** A task group is to be set up on improving workforce diversity and service improvement. TUC and employers to nominate two reps.

Pay and Rewards

Pay and reward principles

The draft pay and reward principles were welcomed and several amendments agreed.

- A redrafted version of the principles, taking on board comments, will be circulated. A communication strategy will also be developed for the principles to ensure that they have the maximum impact at both a national and local level.

Equal Pay

PSF recognised challenges facing employers, employees and their representatives in implementing equal pay legislation and responding to equal pay claims. The TUC highlighted concerns about the funding of equal pay for equal value.

- Agreed need for continuing employer / TU discussions on managing impact on services and jobs / dealing with no win no fee lawyers.

Pensions

Peter Kane reported on recent PSF Pensions Roundtable which took place on 09/02/05.

Flexible Retirement

The PSF welcomed the constructive discussion on flexible retirement.

- Agreed to follow up on: publicising positive examples of flexible retirement benefiting both employers and the workforce; better information at earlier stages on retirement options; options for older employees to step down into less demanding roles; and closer working between HR and Pensions specialists.

Reform to public service pension schemes

Both the Government's position and trade union concerns were outlined. The TUC restated the need for negotiation on pension reform and an examination of alternative approaches to reform based on choice and flexibility.

- David Miliband confirmed he would give further consideration to the scope for providing further background data and to the issues raised by the TUC.

Managing Sickness Absence

Mark Dempsey, HSE, provided an overview of the Ministerial Task Force report on managing sickness absence in the public sector. The importance of joint working between employers and trade unions in achieving reductions in sickness absence was noted.

- PSF agreed to create a sub-group to provide support to the HSE in implementing the relevant recommendations of the Task Force report. TUC and employers to nominate two reps.

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM ACTION NOTE:

27 JUNE 2005

The sixth meeting of the Public Services Forum, was chaired by John Hutton, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The following issues were discussed and actions agreed:

Vision for future of PSF

Paper was presented by Peter Kane, OPSR, which outlined the key principles of public service and workforce reform: Putting People at the Heart of Public Services Reform; Developing Workforce Flexibility; Enabling Efficiency and Promoting the Fairness Agenda. This paper also included a proposal to develop a contract/charter based on these principles for employers, employees and trade unions.

TUC to prepare a response on behalf of the trade unions, this will act as basis for future discussion of how to take the vision forward.

Vision and future work programme to be presented at October meeting of PSF.

Managing Sickness Absence

PSF welcomed the work of the Task Group on Managing Sickness Absence and the literature review prepared by the Health and Safety Executive. The following key points were raised:

- The importance of line managers – both in managing sickness absence when it occurs and in helping to alleviate the causes.
- Comparisons between the absence rates of organisations in the public and private sector rarely compare like with like or take account of successes in the public sector in tackling sickness absence rates.
- It is important to differentiate between long term and short term absences as they require different approaches.
- Solutions to sickness absence have to be tailored to the individual circumstances of the organisation.
- There are many actions which can potentially be taken to reduce sickness absence and TU involvement in the formulating and delivery of these actions can help increase their likely impact.

Task group to report back to October meeting of PSF – to include proposals on how employers / trade union reps can diagnose the root cause of the problem and take appropriate action, drawing on the points raised in the paper and discussion.

Lead Task Force Minister to be invited to next meeting.

Workforce Diversity And Better Public Services

PSF received an update on the work of the PSF Task Group on Diversity. In discussion the following points were raised:

- There are opportunities to learn from the experiences of promoting race equality in Further Education through recruitment, progression and development.
- Training and development of managers is crucial.
- Scope for employers and unions to work together on developing more robust data on workforce diversity.

The Task Group to report to the next meeting with:

- *A set of principles for developing workforce diversity policies that link more directly to service outcomes*
- *A Guidance framework for evaluating diversity objectives through workforce performance management systems*
- *Proposals for improving the development of leaders who are better equipped to lead a diverse workforce.*

PUBLIC SERVICES FORUM: 15 NOVEMBER 2005

Meeting Note

2.30pm Kirkland House, 22 Whitehall

The seventh meeting of the Public Services Forum was chaired by Jim Murphy MP, Cabinet Office Minister, and raised the following issues and actions:

Charter For Better Public Services

- Ian Brinkley (TUC) introduced the TUC paper on Public Services Reform setting out suggested principles for future discussions on public service improvement and workforce reform.
- Peter Kane (OPSR) provided an overview of the Charter for Better Public Services which brings together key points from both the TUC paper and the Government vision paper submitted to PSF at the June 05 PSF meeting.
- The forum welcomed the Charter but the TUC flagged that they needed to consult other unions with an interest and that the draft might need to be amended to incorporate some of the issues raised in the TUC paper. The importance of ensuring it would have an impact on local delivery of public services was also recognised.

Actions

- **The PSF to invite John Oughton to present to the PSF on the progress of the efficiency review.**
- **The Charter to be further developed through a sub-group of PSF and signed off by correspondence by Christmas 05.**

Creating a Healthier Workforce

- Michael MacMillan (OPSR) introduced the action plan for improving the health of the public service workforce and gave an overview of the work of the PSF sub-group to produce this work. Peter Brown (HSE) also gave feedback on the work Ministerial Task Force.
- The Forum endorsed the work of the sub group and the action plan although careful attention would need to be given to the piloting of rewards.
- The action note needed to be expanded to include reference to the impact of injuries at work e.g. back pain and as a result of violence in the workplace and in the home. Gender specific issues in managing sickness absence also needed to be considered as, on average, women were more likely to be absent than men.
- The forum agreed the importance of pursuing evidence based approach to this work and agreed the setting up of pilots which would test many of the ideas in the action plan – however the forum urged that design of these systems should be developed through discussions with front line staff.

Actions

- **PSF sub-group to begin work on implementation of action plan, including the role of pilots.**

Diversity and workforce reform

- Paula McDonald (OPSR) provided an overview of the work of the PSF sub-group on diversity and the proposed plan of actions for PSF agreement.

- PSF welcomed the diversity plan, recognising that diversity wasn't just a 'nice to have' but that it was crucial in tailoring services to the people receiving them.
- The PSF also noted that there are many examples of good practice that should be shared more widely.

Actions

- **PSF agreed to implementation of the action plan and supported the application for funding from the DTI.**

Drive for Change

- Paula McDonald introduced Tony Hassall (Governor, Holloway Prison) and Tom Appadoo (Chair of PoA at Holloway Prison) who gave a presentation on their pilot of the Drive for Change toolkit.
- PSF congratulated Holloway prison on the progress they had made and their approach to improving services and employer-employee engagement.
- PSF also stressed the importance of full, free and frank communications with employees and employers.

Actions

- **A roundtable discussion to be convened for discussion on the key success factors and wider lessons from the pilots and a rollout strategy, with launch of toolkit to take place in early 2006.**

AOB

The Chair noted that this would be Peter Kane's last PSF and thanked him for the contribution he had made to its success.