

**THE NHS STAFF COUNCIL**  
**WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

**JM(SC) 11/2011**

**Latest position: Harmonised on-call arrangements**

The NHS Staff Council's agreement on harmonised on-call arrangements says that from 1 April 2011 payments for on-call will need to be agreed locally and consistent with the nationally agreed definition and principles.

It is expected that employing organisations will work in partnership with recognised trades unions, via the relevant forum, to undertake both the collection and analysis of data on current on-call systems and negotiations to develop and agree harmonised on-call arrangements. However, the date of 1 April is not sacrosanct and it is recognised that local partnerships may not have completed their reviews in time for new harmonised payments to be locally agreed and implemented by that date.

The Staff Council's Implementation Guidance, which was published alongside the Principles, says that organisations will need to agree "what arrangements will apply if negotiations are not completed in time to process new payments from 1 April 2011". Some partnerships have already confirmed to employees that the status quo will apply until their work on the harmonised arrangements has been completed. The Guidance also makes it clear that the former Section 2 on-call scheme (also referred to as the "interim Agenda for Change arrangements") is not to be applied as a default option in lieu of local agreement.

NHS Employing organisations are therefore advised that they need urgently to engage with their local trade union partners to establish a realistic timetable for the development, agreement and implementation of harmonised on-call arrangements and agree appropriate extension of the current on-call protection arrangements (as described in section 2 of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook) if this timetable takes the work beyond the intended deadline of April 2011.

The Implementation Guidance is part of the national agreement. It has been produced by the NHS Staff Council to accompany the agreed Principles for harmonised on-call arrangements in Annex A3 of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook. The Guidance is to support local partnerships in their negotiations and to provide clarity on terms and references.

It is for local partnerships to determine appropriate arrangements for involvement in and governance of the project - to identify who is going to undertake the various elements of the work and how the involvement of representatives from all staff groups will be secured, especially from those where on-call working is common.

The full text of the guidance together with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and information on data collection is available on the NHS Employers [on-call principles webpage](#).