



UNSOCIAL HOURS

On Friday last week, the Department of Health submitted their evidence to the PRB on this restricted remit. Here is a link to the document:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/393071/DH_Evidence_to_NHSPRB.pdf

The document references England only and we would expect separate government evidence to be submitted concerning Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland.

UNISON will use the rest of the PRB evidence round (between now and July) to make a full analysis and critique of the Department's evidence (along with evidence from other bodies e.g. NHS Employers), but here is a quick summary of the key points:

- ◆ Sets the evidence in financial context, showing that funding to the NHS has been cut by an average of 4.2% each year since the Coalition Government took office; that demand for services has increased and spend on short term staffing rose to £2.6bn last year.
- ◆ States that Incremental progression is 'unfair and unaffordable'.
- ◆ States that the current Unsocial Hours payments do 'not reflect modern employment practice'.
- ◆ Suggests options for changing unsocial hours premia which include:
 - ◆ changing the times defined as 'unsocial'
 - ◆ paying Saturdays at plain time
 - ◆ lowering the rates for Sunday and Bank Holidays

The evidence concludes that 'the premium rates on offer plus the times of the day and week in which they are applied, are out of date and a potential barrier to affordable seven day services'.

NHS Employers have submitted cost modelling to support the options listed above.

The Department of Health has not answered the questions raised by the PRB in their call for evidence about what services the NHS needs to extend, what the costs of this extension would be and whether there are other workforce issues which need examination (e.g. availability of staff with the appropriate skills and training).

UNISON has submitted evidence to the PRB on the seven day services remit which will be released and circulated later this week. NHS England is also expected to release and circulate evidence shortly.

Branches are asked to:

- ◆ Note the evidence from the Department of Health
- ◆ Make sure reps and members are aware of the options put forward for future changes to unsocial hours
- ◆ Look out for UNISON's evidence on 7-day services

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