



KEYSTONE ONE YEAR ON

Keystone, the FDA's newest section for HEOs and SEOs, recently reached its first anniversary. National Officer **Wynne Parry** outlines the progress made so far and explains what we need to do to take Keystone forward.

It's hard to believe that a whole year has passed since we launched Keystone, the section of the FDA for managers and professionals in SEO, HEO and equivalent grades, yet this milestone presents an ideal opportunity to reflect on the last year and celebrate our achievements.

The decision to fully open up membership of the FDA to staff beyond our traditional base followed years of careful and thoughtful debate. It was a significant decision to take, not only in terms of meeting a clear demand from

SEO and HEO staff to be part of the FDA, but also in helping to securing the future of the union. An increase in members, and potentially representatives, can only strengthen the FDA's capability. Additionally, we have already seen Keystone members retain their FDA membership on promotion to grade 7, further increasing the pipeline.

The opportunity for us is huge. There are more than 103,000 staff in SEO, HEO and related grades. A significant number of these staff will already be members of a trade union, but many won't, and may still be looking for a union that better meets their aspirations.

Supporting the 'squeezed middle'

Feedback from SEO and HEO attendees at our FDA Learn and Keyskills courses and Civil Service Live events told us that there is a demand from middle managers to be a part of the FDA.

Keystone members tell us that they joined because they were looking for a union that provides a credible and pragmatic voice that speaks up for managers and professionals. Being part of the FDA matters to Keystone members.

So as part of the FDA, we wanted Keystone members to be able to access all the benefits we offer, but equally we wanted them to have their own identity, a section of the union that would focus on their issues whilst allowing them to play a full part in the wider FDA family.

We designed Keystone as a section of the FDA with its own distinct branding, a separate website and dedicated staffing. Members receive a weekly email newsletter that they can share with colleagues. Uniquely, potential members can also subscribe to the newsletter to find out more about what we do.

In developing Keystone we conducted a good deal of research into the target membership, which gave us valuable

insight into what potential members were looking for from their union.

They are the squeezed middle of the civil service, struggling with unpopular and divisive performance management systems, inadequate IT support and increased expectations from both their senior managers and staff. They feel undervalued and unsupported, with the central focus seemingly on providing pipelines to external talent from outside the civil service, but little to tap into the talents of our current managers.

So how have we found things since launch? Because we listened to what our target membership were telling us, we were confident that Keystone would be an attractive proposition. In fact, our first member actually joined just 30 minutes after we had launched!

Our expectations around the likely reception from potential members were further realised at last year's Civil Service Live events. It is not stretching a point to say that the Keystone stalls were often mobbed with interest from passers-by and prospective members.

This year's events also saw lots of interest from prospective Keystone members, with many saying they had "heard good things" and wanted to know more about FDA representation for HEOs and SEOs.

Career development: Keyskills

As much as staff were looking for an organisation that spoke up for managers and professionals, they were also looking for assistance with their professional development. They told us that they wanted to talk to people with experience of their world, not assistance hotlines or those without knowledge of the civil service – they wanted attractive courses that were easy to access.

As anticipated, our Keyskills professional development offer is overwhelmingly popular. Since launch, more than 1,500 people have attended a Keyskills event and the feedback from members is uniformly very positive. Keyskills is significant not just for the fantastic quality of the courses on offer, but in changing the perceptions of what a trade union is and can be.

Working with employers

Keyskills provides us with the opportunity to work with employers to help them meet skill gaps and enable



Above left: Keystone National Officer Wynne Parry outlines the benefits of joining during a Keyskills taster session at Civil Service Live



Above right: Member Liaison Manager Sue Hollywood-Powell at the Keystone stall during a Home Office recruitment event

How you can spread the word about Keystone

FDA members, working side by side with SEO and HEO colleagues in workplaces across the country, are the union's best possible advocates. You are uniquely placed to make Keystone visible where you work.

Enclosed with this issue of *Public Service Magazine* you'll find a leaflet outlining what Keystone provides for HEOs and SEOs, including web links to further information and details on how to join.

Please pass this onto an HEO or SEO

colleague and ask them to get in touch via the contact information on the leaflet if they have any questions.

Any member who recruits a new Keystone member will be entered in to a draw to win an iPad mini or its equivalent in vouchers – simply email our Organiser Becky Billington at rebecca@fda.org.uk, confirming the name of your colleague. Your email is your entry into the draw and each new member you recruit is classed as a separate entry.

staff with union-backed opportunities to achieve their potential. We have presented courses for BIS, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Department for Transport and worked with diversity networks in the Home Office and HMRC. This work benefits our members whilst allowing us to present employers with a completely different perspective on the value of working with a union.

The aspirations of middle managers have for too long been overlooked and Keystone is promoting the need for change. For some employers this presents a significant challenge to their relationship with their middle managers and some will need time to adapt to the increased profile and opportunities Keystone provides. It has the power to transform the industrial relations

landscape of the civil service.

Keystone representatives

Over our first year, membership has been growing across Government and we now have Keystone members spread across 23 different departments and agencies. As membership grows we are also developing our activist base. Members have now elected four Keystone members to the Executive Committee of the FDA – this is crucial in building a lasting representative structure to help support our members.

So, a really encouraging first year. We know that once people find out about Keystone – when they know what it offers and they get a chance to discuss being part of the FDA with someone – they join.