



SPF Members' Handbook

WELCOME TO THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Social Partnership Forum (SPF) brings together NHS Employers, NHS Trade Unions, NHS England, Health Education England (HEE) and the Department of Health (DH) to discuss and debate the development and implementation of the workforce implications of policy.

How this handbook can help you

This handbook contains useful information about the SPF. It explains the purpose of the SPF, the role of partners and how you, as a member of the forum, can get involved to support its aims. It also provides practical information on the SPF's detailed working arrangements. The handbook will be reviewed annually to ensure content is up-to-date.

This handbook should be used alongside the SPF Partnership Agreement and the SPF website (www.socialpartnershipforum.org).

Key contacts

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| Andrew Morris | DH | Heads up the Social Partnership team in DH, which provides the secretariat for the SPF meetings, working closely with all partners. | If you have any queries about the Social Partnership Forum, contact: andrew.morris@dh.gsi.gov.uk |
| June Chandler | NHS Trade Unions | Provides secretariat support on behalf of NHS Trade Unions. | If you have any queries about the involvement of NHS Trade Unions in the SPF, contact: j.chandler@unison.co.uk |
| James Shepherd | SPF Project Manager | Responsible for the SPF subgroups, the National Regional Group and SPF meetings with CQC. | If you have any queries about these groups contact: James.shepherd@nhsemployers.org |
| Sonya Mbende | NHS Employers | SPF Project Support Officer supports the day-to-day running of the SPF subgroups. | If you have any queries about the subgroups contact: Sonya.Mbende@nhsemployers.org |
| Rachel Heyes | NHS Employers | Senior Programme Support Officer provides secretariat support for NHS Employers at the SPF and is responsible for updating the SPF website. | If you have any queries about NHS Employers involvement in the SPF or website content, contact: rachel.heyes@nhsemployers.org |
| Caroline Davis | NHS England | Business Manager to Chief People Officer provides secretariat support for NHS England at the SPF. | If you have any queries about NHS England's involvement in the SPF, contact: caroline.davis7@nhs.net |
| Gary Theobald | HEE | Head of HR & OD provides secretariat support for HEE at the SPF. | If you have any queries about HEE's involvement in the SPF, contact: g.theobald@nhs.net |
| Lynn Slater Robert Pickard | DH | Provide business and secretariat support to the SPF Wider and Strategic Group meetings. | If you have any queries about DH's involvement in the SPF, contact: lynn.slater@dh.gsi.gov.uk robert.pickard@dh.gsi.gov.uk |

Social Partnership Forum

The SPF is a forum to discuss, debate and involve partners in the development and implementation of the workforce implications of policy. The aim of the SPF is to:

- contribute trade union and employer perspectives to the development of policy
- provide constructive comments on emerging policy at a formative stage
- contribute ideas on the workforce implications of developing policy and implementation
- promote effective communications between partners.

The SPF is built on a framework of effective partnership working. The principles, processes and structures of partnership working are linked to partners' shared goals and objectives. The shared approach and principles for effective joint working are set out in the SPF Partnership Agreement.

Why work in partnership?

There is a growing body of academic evidence that shows good staff engagement, such as the partnership approach, can deliver better patient outcomes as well as improve overall organisational performance ([West et al 2011](#), [West et al 2013](#) and [The Point of Care Foundation 2014](#).)

The [NHS Constitution Handbook](#) also emphasises the importance of staff engagement and partnership working and requires the NHS to commit to 'engage staff in decisions that affect them and the services they provide, individually, through representative organisations and through local partnership working arrangements.' The potentially serious impact of a disengaged workforce was highlighted starkly in the [Francis Inquiry Report \(2013\)](#).

Effective partnership working at a national level has the potential to produce some important benefits for all parties. These include:

- delivering improved outcomes for patients/service users
- improved mutual understanding
- an opportunity for partners to contribute their experience and ideas to the development and implementation of the workforce implications of health and social care policy
- an ability to assess the likely impact of emerging policy on the NHS workforce and to mitigate risks
- more effective development and implementation of policy
- ensuring high standards of employment practice
- providing a transparent and streamlined structure for NHS trade union, employer and staff engagement across the health and care system.

What are the benefits for each partner?

The SPF enables partners to work together to promote effective partnership working on the workforce implications of policy. It brings together representatives from the DH, NHS England, Health Education England and the NHS Trade Unions (representing NHS staff) and NHS Employers (which provides the employers' voice). This model enables partners to discuss, debate and involve each other in the development and implementation of the workforce implications of policy.

DH perspective: Ministers and the DH value the SPF, as it provides a forum which upholds high levels of cooperation and commitment to improve health and social care outcomes for patients. The forum provides valuable input into the workforce implications of policy development and supports the implementation of policies.

Working in partnership across the health and care landscape and engaging with the workforce is key to making the best decisions about patient care. Evidence shows that engaged, satisfied employees are more productive and that in the NHS, staff and patient satisfaction are closely linked. DH believes that engaging NHS staff in decisions that affect them is a crucial factor in the delivery of safe and high quality care for our patients.

TU perspective: The NHS Trade Unions believe it is in their members' best interests to engage in partnership working with governments and employers, to seek solutions to challenges and problems. Partnership working puts an onus on both employers and trade unions to engage and consult on all decisions that affect staff. Partnership underpins and facilitates sound and effective employer and trade union relations and has a track record of delivering real gains for staff and patients. As a crucial determinant of the quality of healthcare, a growing body of evidence-based research shows that effective staff engagement in NHS organisations improves the patient experience and healthcare outcomes.

Employers' perspective: The SPF allows employers to get an early sight of health policy. It also allows them to give their perspective on how policy should be developed and highlight the possible workforce implications of a policy. In particular, the forum allows employers to influence how proposals are implemented and, through discussions with partners, to make sure they are workable and realise maximum benefits for patients.

NHS England's perspective: Responsible for the wise investment of over £100bn of tax payers' resources, NHS England makes critical decisions about patient care which affect the NHS and the people who work in it. The SPF is an invaluable forum which allows for the workforce implications of those decisions to be discussed with employers and staff representatives in an atmosphere of constructive partnership. There is clear evidence showing the link between staff and patient satisfaction, and NHS England believes that a well-motivated and committed workforce is of benefit to patients.

Health Education England (HEE)'s perspective: HEE is responsible for the education, training and personal development of every member of staff, and recruiting for values in order to deliver a better health and healthcare workforce for England. HEE is committed to working in partnership with its recognised trade union partners, to maximise both the successful delivery of HEE's strategy and corporate objectives and to work for the wider development and benefit of the service in general.

Roles and Responsibilities

To enable effective operation of these partnership arrangements, all partners agree to recognise and respect each other's roles and functions, which are distinct but complementary.

At national level partners recognise that:

- Ministers are democratically elected and have formal responsibility as leaders of the health and care system for developing and implementing public policy through the DH and its Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).
- Trade Unions have a responsibility to represent the interests of their members.
- NHS Employers has a responsibility to represent the views of employers in the NHS.

- NHS England has a responsibility to discuss and engage with partners on significant policy decisions which affect the NHS workforce.
- HEE has a responsibility to discuss significant decisions and developments affecting the planning and development of the healthcare and public health workforce.

A range of other organisations, groups and networks exist at a national and regional level with which the SPF liaises and interfaces through the national SPF, its subgroups and regional SPFs. This includes the Care Quality Commission, NHS Improvement, Public Health England and other organisations leading health and care initiatives that impact on the health workforce. The SPF also works with the NHS Staff Council, which is responsible for formal negotiations on pay and terms and conditions issues for staff covered by Agenda for Change.

At regional level partners recognise that regional level partnership forums provide an arena for overarching confidential discussions and debate between trade unions and employers about strategic issues affecting the NHS workforce. They contribute ideas on the workforce implications of developing policy and its implementation. They take a lead role in promoting good practice and communication between national and local partnership forums to drive up the quality of care for patients and improve staff experience. Further information regarding the different regional partnership forums, their membership and work plans can be found on the [SPF website](#).

At local employer level - SPF recognises the importance of partnership working between management and trade unions in health and care organisations and the positive contribution it can make to patient care. Partners have a shared aim to ensure that effective partnership working is sustained and embedded in all employer organisations and produce and promote tools and resources, made available on the SPF website, to support a partnership approach.

Members' behaviour

The SPF and its subgroup meetings are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect even when the partners are in disagreement over a specific issue. The following guidelines provide some agreed ground rules to support a positive and constructive working environment:

- Wherever possible keep the language simple and avoid jargon. If you do not fully understand an issue, ensure that you seek clarification before agreeing or disagreeing.
- Respect other members of the forum as individuals with equal rights.
- Recognise and respect the responsibilities that individuals have as representatives of their respective partner organisations.
- Where appropriate, maintain confidentiality on issues of a sensitive nature and where agreed, do not share confidential papers outside of the meeting. If an issue is potentially sensitive, agree how and when it will be communicated externally. During the meetings individuals have the right to express opinions without having their views quoted outside of the meeting.
- Strive for consensus as far as possible. Sharing of information should be encouraged and sufficient time allowed for meaningful discussion.
- Where a consensus is not reached but a recommendation still has to be made, the divergence of views needs to be clearly noted.

As a member of the national SPF or one of its subgroups, you represent one of the partners i.e. NHS Employers, NHS Trade Unions, HEE, NHS England, DH (not the

SPF as a whole). As an SPF member you should use your judgement, guided by the principles of partnership working, to engage with your own constituents outside the group as and when necessary. Each partner organisation has its own processes in place for gathering wider views to input into discussions.

Representatives should:

- use their judgement to engage with their own partner constituents within SPF for views/feedback, as and when necessary
- report back to their SPF colleagues on relevant developments or progress via the lead contact for the partner organisation they represent
- market SPFs and encourage regional tiers to become more involved in regional SPFs
- be involved in the annual programme of regional visits.

In 2015, an independent report undertaken by the Involvement and Participation Association (IPA) looked at how the national SPF operates, identified strengths as well as areas for improvement and as a result, partners have committed to a range of measures including:

- Review the Partnership Agreement (plus Members' Handbook) so that it better reflects the new structures in the NHS.
- Ensure the SPF is able to focus on a smaller number of key strategic priority agenda items.
- Ensure the right strategic partners attend meetings.
- Promote the value of partnership working within their own organisations and actively seek opportunities to promote its ethos more widely.
- Be more outcome focussed both individually and collectively to benefit patients and staff.
- When recommending actions, to consider what contribution you will make rather than nominating or implying action for others.

A particular success identified in the report states that it '*remains one of the most advanced forms of industrial partnership in the British public sector*'.

In addition to the stocktake, a review of communications, including the website, is being undertaken to identify how the SPF can better communicate information about its achievement, including how it has influenced and improved policy development and implementation.

Detailed Working Arrangements

Membership

Partners each nominate a lead person who is responsible for co-ordinating relevant views.

The current leads are:

- Christina McAnea, National Secretary for Health at UNISON
- Danny Mortimer, Chief Executive of NHS Employers
- Charlie Massey, Director General, External Relations, Department of Health
- Stephen Moir, Chief People Officer, NHS England
- Ian Cumming, Chief Executive, Health Education England

In addition, a Health Minister chairs SPF Wider Group meetings.

Each of the partners is responsible for nominating and regularly reviewing its representatives for the SPF. Membership of the SPF Strategic Group consists of:

- seven NHS Trade Union representatives
- three employer representatives
- one DH representative
- two NHS England representatives
- one HEE representative.

Additional representatives from all partners sit on the SPF Wider Group.

With the agreement of partners, nominated individuals are also permitted to attend the Wider Group meetings as observers; for example the TUC has a permanent observer seat.

A full list of members can be found at Annex A.

National Meetings

The Wider SPF meets three times a year with the smaller Strategic Group meeting four times a year. The Wider SPF meetings are chaired by Ben Gummer, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Care Quality. The Strategic Group is co-chaired by NHS Trade Unions and NHS Employers and operates under the auspices of the Wider SPF.

Conduct of meetings

Items may be placed on the agenda by any of the parties. Secretariat arrangements are led by the DH, who liaise with key contacts from NHS Trade Unions, NHS Employers, HEE and NHS England. All partners are encouraged to use the forum to showcase effective partnership working in line with the aims of the forum.

The agenda and any supporting papers will be circulated one week before the meeting date where possible via the SPFMailbox@dh.gsi.gov.uk.

The SPF chairs will manage business and maintain proper conduct of meetings and be responsible for ensuring that individual members uphold the partnership principles and the co-operative spirit of the forum.

Consultation and information

In addition to SPF meetings, consultation and dialogue will continue and partners will meet informally as necessary to discuss specific policy issues.

To help facilitate effective working the partners agree to the following:

- every effort will be made to provide information in good time for discussion and/or consultation
- all parties will undertake to provide a considered, co-ordinated and timely response to issues on which their views are sought/on which they are consulted
- all parties to respect confidentiality where that is required or requested; and otherwise to conduct their dialogue openly.

Minutes and communications

All meetings are minuted. Joint key communication from the Wider Group meetings are also agreed by all partners and published in the SPF Bulletin and on the website. The new [interactive infographic](#) shows the SPF organisational structure and the relationships between the SPF Wider Group and the SPF subgroups.

SPF subgroups

From time to time, as appropriate, the SPF may establish subgroups to develop specific pieces of work or to look at particular issues in more detail. For more detail on the current SPF subgroups see the [SPF website](#).

Secretariat support to the subgroups is provided by the SPF Project Manager. Each subgroup is made up of representatives from the partner organisations and has agreed terms of reference and work plans.

The terms of reference for each group are regularly reviewed and the current versions are available on the SPF website.

An update of subgroup activity is presented at each national Wider Group meeting and a National Action Log is refreshed regularly and published on the [SPF website](#).

SPF campaigns

SPF has led or supported a number of national campaigns such as the [Flu Fighter campaign](#), to encourage healthcare workers to have the seasonal flu vaccine; and the [Learning for Life](#) campaign to increase the level of access to learning opportunities in the NHS and to raise awareness about the positive impact of training on patient care. The SPF works with the Whistleblowing Helpline to help ensure organisations create supportive environments where staff feel confident to raise their concerns, and have suitable formal [whistleblowing](#) processes in place to support this.

SPF website

The SPF website is a resource for members. It provides information on the forum's key priorities and showcases good practice in partnership working through a range of case studies. It also includes key documents which have been developed in partnership through the SPF.

Evaluation and review

The SPF partnership arrangements set out in this document will be subject to regular evaluation and review, to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose.

Annex A - Membership of Social Partnership Forum

STRATEGIC GROUP

NHS Trade Unions

| | |
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| Christina McAnea | UNISON (Staff Side Co-chair) |
| Jon Skewes | Royal College of Midwives (RCM) |
| Josie Irwin | Royal College of Nursing (RCN) |
| Raj Jethwa | British Medical Association (BMA) |
| Claire Sullivan | Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) |
| Jon Restell | Managers in Partnership (MIP) |
| Sara Gorton | Unison/British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) |

NHS Employers

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| Danny Mortimer | NHS Employers (Employers Side Co-chair) |
| Rebecca Smith | Director of Engagement |
| Plus two nominated employer representatives | |

Department of Health

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| Charlie Massey | Director General, Strategy and External Relations |
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NHS England

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| Stephen Moir | Chief People Officer |
| Michael Macdonald | Director of Strategy |

Health Education England

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| Lee Whitehead | Director of People and Communications |
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Secretariat

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|----------------|--------------------------|
| Andrew Morris | Department of Health |
| James Shepherd | Subgroup Project Manager |
| June Chandler | NHS Trade Unions |
| Rachel Heyes | NHS Employers |
| Gary Theobald | Health Education England |

WIDER GROUP

Chair

Ben Gummer, MP - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Care Quality

NHS Trade Unions

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Christina McAnea | UNISON |
| Hilary Lloyd | British Medical Association (BMA) |
| Jon Skewes | Royal College of Midwives (RCM) |
| Claire Sullivan | Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) |
| Jon Restell | Managers in Partnership (MiP) |
| Josie Irwin | Royal College of Nursing (RCN) |
| Colenzo Jarrett-Thorpe | Unite the Union |
| Rehana Azam | General Municipal & Boilermakers (GMB) |
| Annette Mansell-Green | British Dietetic Association (BDA) |
| Lesley-Anne Baxter | British Orthoptic Society |
| Andrew Taylor | Federation of Clinical Scientists |
| Eddie Saville | Hospital Consultants & Specialists Assoc (HCSA) |
| Brian Harris | Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists (SCP) |
| Richard Pembridge | Society of Radiographers (SOR) |
| Sara Gorton | British Association of Occupational Therapists |
| Matt Dykes | Trade Union Congress (TUC) – observer |

NHS Employers

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Danny Mortimer | Chief Executive |
| Rebecca Smith | Director of Engagement |
| Plus four nominated employer representatives | |

Department of Health

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|-----------------|---|
| Charlie Massey | Director General, Strategy and External Relations |
| Giles Denham | Director, Workforce Strategy |
| Barry Mussenden | Deputy Director, External Partnerships |

NHS England

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Stephen Moir | Chief People Officer |
| Michael Macdonald | Director of Strategy |

Health Education England

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| Ian Cumming | Chief Executive |
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Devolved administrations

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|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Paula McGeown | Northern Ireland Assembly |
| John Nicholls | Scottish Devolved Administration |
| Donna Hill | Welsh Assembly |

Additional stakeholders

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|---------------------------|---|
| Anne Sharp/Nick Dover | ACAS |
| Paul Bowen | NHS Clinical Commissioners representative |
| Johnny Marshall | NHS Confederation |
| Michael Rose | Business Services Association (BSA) |
| Christina Pond | Skills for Health |
| Position currently vacant | Independent sector healthcare provider |

Secretariat as per the Strategic Group plus:

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| Lynn Slater / Robert Pickard | Department of Health |
| Caroline Davis | NHS England |
| Deborah Shipp | Health Education England |

Annex B - Resources: websites and research

SPF partners' websites

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| Social Partnership Forum | www.socialpartnershipforum.org |
| UNISON | www.unison.org.uk |
| NHS Employers | www.nhsemployers.org |
| NHS England | www.england.nhs.uk |
| Health Education England | www.hee.nhs.uk |
| Royal College of Midwives | www.rcm.org.uk |
| Royal College of Nursing | www.rcn.org.uk |
| British Medical Association | www.bma.org.uk |
| Chartered Society of Physiotherapy | www.csp.org.uk |
| Managers in Partnership | www.miphealth.org.uk |
| Unite | www.unitetheunion.org |
| GMB | www.gmb.org.uk |
| British Dietetic Association | www.bda.uk.com |
| British Orthoptic Society | www.orthoaptics.org.uk |
| Federation of Clinical Scientists | www.acb.org.uk |
| Hospital Consultants & Specialists Association | www.hcsa.com |
| Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists | www.feetforlife.org |
| Society of Radiographers | www.sor.org |
| British Association of Occupational Therapists | www.cot.co.uk |
| Trades Union Congress | www.tuc.org.uk |
| Business Services Association | www.bsa-org.com |

Other useful partnership organisations' websites

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| Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service | www.acas.org.uk |
| Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development | www.cipd.co.uk |
| Involvement and Participation Association | www.ipa-involve.com |
| Partnership Institute | www.partnership-institute.co.uk |
| Skills for Health | www.skillsforhealth.org.uk |