

North West Social Partnership Forum (SPF)

Terms of Reference

The North West SPF was set up by employers, trade unions and NHS Employers to pursue their common purpose of developing a world-class health and social care service delivered by a world-class workforce in the North West region.

Effective partnership working will produce important benefits that include improved services for patients and users and ensure high standards of employment practices in the health and care services in the North West region.

Aims

The Regional SPF aims to provide a modern partnership approach to issues affecting the NHS workforce, where a regional view is needed or would be useful. In particular, it will:

- Keep the patient at the centre of everything we do.
- Identify and promote successful partnership working, which is providing positive benefits to staff, service delivery and patient experience.
- Support and enable a strategic agenda, focused on the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and other key workforce priorities in the North West.
- Contribute trade union and employer perspectives at a formative stage, on the possible workforce implications of the development and implementation of policy.
- Promote effective communications between partners.
- Seek and promote good workforce practices across the North West region.
- Feed North West regional views into the National SPF.
- Support and contribute to the North SPF Conference, which currently meets once per year.
- Ensure regional oversight and scrutiny of local partnership working in the ICS footprint within the North West.
- At the discretion of the chairs, pick up ad-hoc pieces of work in partnership through designated Task and Finish Groups.



Working arrangements

Principles for effective joint working

The Partnership recognises respective roles and responsibilities, establishes shared values and common purpose and sets some key principles for effective joint working. It provides the basis for a continually improving partnership which will lead to long-term solutions that work for staff, patients and service users.

All partners recognise the importance of good formal and informal working relations, built on trust and shared responsibility, while respecting each other's roles and functions which are distinct but complementary. All partners commit to adopting these principles in their dealings with each other:

- Building trust and mutual respect for each other's roles and responsibilities.
- A positive and constructive approach.
- Early discussion of emerging issues and maintaining dialogue on policy and priorities.
- Openness, honesty and transparency in communications.
- Where appropriate, confidentiality and agreed external positions.
- Making the best use of resources.
- Agreeing issues for onward cascade.

Membership

Membership of the forum will comprise trade union representatives, employers, commissioners and arms' length bodies, more specifically to include:

Management representatives

Management representatives will include:

- Chief People Officers from NHS trusts/providers in the North West or a nominated Senior Workforce representative.
- Local leaders from, NHS England and NHS Employers
- ICB Chief People Officer or a nominated Senior Workforce representative.
- Other appropriate employer representatives.

Trade union representatives

Trade Union Representatives will include:

- UNISON
- The Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
- The Royal College of Midwives (RCM)
- Unite
- GMB



- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)
- The Society of Radiographers (SoR)
- The College of Podiatrists (CoP)
- Managers in Partnership (MiP)
- The British Medical Association (BMA)
- Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA)
- British Dental Association

Other associated health and care partners to be invited/included at the discretion of the joint chairs.

Meeting logistics

Frequency of meetings

The forum will meet bi-monthly, with one meeting a year being the in-person North SPF Conference. Task and Finish Groups may be formed to undertake specific pieces of work in between meetings and will report progress into the North West SPF.

Chairing arrangements

The forum will alternate chairing arrangements between the staff chair(s) and management chair(s). The joint chairs will be responsible for the development of meeting agendas and for the review of the efficacy of the forum, supported by NHS Employers.

Facilitation

The secretariat for the forum will be provided by the National Engagement Service (North team) at NHS Employers. Every effort will be made to provide information in good time for discussion or consultation.

Communication

- Chatham House rules are to be observed in the course of meeting notes and general conducting of network business.
- Joint public communications will be agreed from time to time. At the close of each meeting, the group should be clear on the agreed key communication points for wider dissemination.
- All partners undertake to respect confidentiality where required or requested; and otherwise to conduct their dialogue openly.

Review

There will be an annual review of these terms of reference and arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The next review will be in October 2025.