



Key comms

Social Partnership Forum (SPF) Wider Group

15 October 2024

Welcome and introductions

Karin Smyth, Minister of State for Health, chaired her first Wider Group meeting and was introduced to each member of the group.

NHS Long Term Workforce Plan update - Jo Lenaghan, NHS England

In 2023, the [Long Term Workforce Plan](#) (LTWP) was published with the aim to focus on retaining existing talent, making the best use of new technology and instigating the biggest recruitment drive in NHS history. The SPF was involved in the development of the plan and is supporting its implementation. Good progress has been made with staff retention since the plan was published.

The new government has already begun to focus on education and skills, establishing Skills England, the arms-length body to bring partners together to meet the skills needs of the future. This will result in a reform of apprenticeships, including a new foundation apprenticeship to encourage young people into career routes such as the NHS.

Recently, there have been two major developments which will influence the LTWP. In September, the Darzi report was published which highlighted three 'big shifts' needed to address the pressures on the NHS: moving from hospital to community care; analogue systems to digital; and treatment to prevention.

Secondly, the government has published its intention to develop a 10-year health plan which will be informed by a consultation with staff and patients.



In the light of these developments, the LTWP team at NHS England will work in parallel with government and NHS leaders to publish a refresh of the existing LTWP in summer 2025. This will involve collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including trade unions and policy leads.

There is an appetite among NHS leaders for the development of improved models of care and an opportunity to scale up good work already underway, for example, hiring staff from alternative population groups such as care leavers, refugees and the Armed Forces.

Trade unions pointed out that short-term pressures can impact on recruitment ambitions. They mentioned the need for joined-up policy between government departments relating to international recruitment for health and care staff, and a need for ensuring the development of sufficient non-clinical leadership and management roles.

National ambulance SPF update - Kerry Gulliver, Sharan Bandesha, group co-chairs

Earlier this year, [a cultural review](#) was undertaken of ambulance trusts to support the improvement of culture within the ambulance service. This has led to a broad range of multi-agency work. Ambulance trusts are working hard to improve the working environment and ensure all staff can attend work feeling safe and valued. There are several workstreams associated with cultural improvement, including equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and sexual safety.

The national ambulance SPF is working together on three priorities to support cultural change in the sector:

- Collaboration - including developing a statement to support cultural change which is due to be approved via national ambulance SPF.
- Education and development - of key stakeholders.
- Leadership – role modelling the leadership style that supports and enables culture change.

Trade unions added that they are also committed to tackling sexual harassment, supporting an open reporting culture where colleagues can raise any concerns with confidence they will be listened to. Trade unions recognised the need for further training for their representatives to increase their level of understanding, ensure a



proportionate response and better represent all parties involved in these matters, who may be members of the same union.

There was an agreement for closer alignment between the national SPF and the national ambulance SPF to ensure a co-ordinated approach between the forums and the sharing of good practice.

Future NHS workforce solution - Andy McKinlay, Jeff Pasternack, NHS BSA and Tom Simons, NHS England

The team gave a strategic overview of the new [workforce solution transformation programme](#) to be introduced into the NHS to replace ESR. A total of 15,000 staff across England and Wales were involved in the survey on desired functionality and the aim is to keep an open dialogue with all stakeholders during the development and implementation process.

There will be key improvements to the current solution, specifically in relation to recruitment and talent acquisition, staff induction, retention, education and training, career development and workforce forecasting. Staff will be able to transfer to other NHS organisations more easily, there will be clearer information on development and learning opportunities as well as AI functionality and a wealth of integrated data for accurate reporting.

Pension information will also be accessible and there will be a reduction in payroll errors due to more accurate tracking of working hours and holiday entitlement.

Tackling violence against staff - Alan Lofthouse UNISON and Rebecca Smith, NHS Employers

As part of the [NHS pay agreement](#) in 2023, the SPF was commissioned to identify ways to tackle violence and aggression against staff. This work was carried out in partnership and led by a representative from NHS Employers and from UNISON. The work culminated in a report which identifies a crossover between sexual safety, bullying and inclusion issues within NHS organisations.

The report makes five overarching recommendations:

- Make work and workplaces safer.
- Leadership – set out the roles and responsibilities for government, NHS England and integrated care systems.
- Make decisions based on data and support a reporting culture.



- Undertake risk assessment, training and support.
- Increase partnership working in regional, system and organisational SPFs in tackling violence and aggression.

The group agreed to formally ratify the report.

Linked to this work, NHS England developed a refreshed version of the violence prevention and reduction standard. This was carried out in partnership with the SPF through its violence reduction subgroup. Once the refreshed standard is published, the SPF intends to champion this nationally, regionally and locally.

