

Wider Group key comms – December 2024

Key communications from the 4 December Wider Group meeting.

Welcome

Karin Smyth, Minister of State for Health, chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees, giving a brief update on progress around [Make Work Pay](#) and the continued work on the [Employment Rights Bill](#) and the [10-Year Health Plan](#).

10-Year Health Plan – Sarah Felix, Gavin Larnner, DHSC

In response to the recommendations set out in the [Darzi report](#), the government invited the public, healthcare workforce and organisations to submit their input into the plan.

The deadline for organisational responses has now closed, with 15 virtual events attended by thousands of staff and 1,900 organisational responses submitted. Initial areas respondents are focusing on include staff shortages, funding and resource limitations, technology and digital infrastructure challenges, and pressures on time and capacity to deliver services effectively. There is also a desire from respondents to reduce waste, see better coordination across health and care service provision, and improved patient access to care, especially GPs and mental health services.

As part of the 10-Year Health Plan engagement strategy 11 working groups have been established, including a people workstream co-chaired by Gavin Larnner, DHSC, and Ali Griffin, London Councils. As national SPF co-chairs, Danny Mortimer, NHS Employers, and Helga Pile, UNISON, will represent NHS employers and trade unions at these meetings.

Once reports have been compiled following the engagement process, the government



aims to set out a 10-Year Health Plan with recommendations on how to address three key shifts: analogue to digital, hospital to community and treatment to prevention.

There was confirmation that additional opportunities for meaningful engagement on the development of the plan will be provided through both the Wider and Strategic Groups. The national SPF will also support regional SPF discussions on the health plan as they should have an important role in its development.

NHS operational planning guidance – Iain Eaves, NHS England

NHS England is in the process of finalising the operational planning guidance for 2025/26. This is due to be published in December. It will look and feel different, including a smaller set of national targets than in the past, a focus on reducing elective waiting times and improving access to primary care. There will be greater flexibilities for integrated care boards (ICBs) and partner trusts to make decisions across services, and wider reform ambitions will be determined throughout the process.

Trade unions highlighted issues arising from NHS budgets, in terms of vacancy freezes and other employment related issues, and the need for the new guidance to address these.

Partnership working case study (HPMA award winner 2024) – Rachael Charlton, Ruth Knighton, Karen Cashmore, East Cheshire NHS Trust (ECT)

ECT won the 2024 HPMA Excellence in People Award for partnership working with trade unions to raise awareness and improve support for staff affected by menopause. Read the winner's [case study](#) on the SPF website.

The initiative has resulted in positive staff survey responses on support offered and a reduction in unplanned absence. The collaborative working between trust leadership up to board level, staff across all ages and genders and trade union representatives was apparent. ECT colleagues discussed their plans to adopt a partnership approach for other wellbeing projects targeting sexual safety and reducing violence and aggression in the workplace.



SPF independent stocktake report – Danny Mortimer, NHS Employers, Helga Pile, UNISON

To ensure the SPF continues to support the NHS effectively, partners agreed in 2016 that the SPF should complete a regular stocktake. The latest was carried out by IPA, covering the period since the last stocktake in 2019. It includes a focus on activity around the transition from clinical commissioning groups to ICBs, the [Long Term Workforce Plan](#) and COVID-19 work. The group discussed building on the good work identified in the stocktake report to ensure effective partnership working arrangements are maintained in the NHS. The national SPF secretariat will develop an action plan with the SPF co-chairs to take this forward.

SPF co-chairs standing updates – Danny Mortimer, NHS Employers, Helga Pile, UNISON

The refreshed [Violence Protection and Reduction \(VPR\) Standard](#) was published on 3 December. It aims to support NHS organisations in taking action to prevent and reduce violence and abuse against staff. Trade unions commented that the standard provides a good platform for partnership working to address violence and abuse. Sexual safety in the NHS is also a priority for the SPF. Partnership working on violence and aggression and sexual safety will be discussed in future Workforce Issues Group meetings.

The next Wider Group meeting will be held on 19 March 2025. Learn more about the [SPF Wider Group](#).

