

## Meeting the Quality and Productivity Challenge for the NHS in Partnership

1. The National Social Partnership Forum (SPF) has developed a set of jointly agreed core principles on how the NHS can work together to meet the challenges ahead. We have drawn up and agreed these principles nationally, in partnership.

### Why are these principles needed?

2. The NHS is entering a period of financial challenge which will have significant implications for staff. The National Social Partnership Forum believes there is a need for a set of clear, structured principles to underpin the way the Department of Health, NHS employers, trade unions and staff respond to this challenge. A copy of these principles is attached.
3. By following the principles we can build a strong partnership approach to developing and implementing the measures necessary to meet the quality and productivity challenge ahead, whilst at the same time improving services for patients.
4. It is important also to recognise that the principles are consistent with the values and pledges set out in the NHS Constitution: most importantly the pledges put the interests of patients first and commit to engage staff in decisions that affect them and the services they provide, individually, through representative organisations and through local partnership working arrangements.
5. The principles are also in line with David Nicholson's four principles of change: co-production (working together); subsidiarity (power from the bottom up); clinical engagement and leadership; and system alignment (pulling in the same direction). These principles can be found on the [Department of Health website](#):

## Monitoring these principles

6. We have designed these principles to be used by all. And we believe they are right for the NHS. We therefore want to ensure the principles are as widely followed as possible. By using exception reporting we will, through national, regional and local SPFs networks monitor and support the use of these principles,.

## Conclusion

7. Effective partnership working is at the core of a successful NHS. The principles are central to making partnership working successful.

**The National Social Partnership Forum  
March 2010**

## **THE PRINCIPLES FOR THE NHS - MEETING THE CHALLENGE IN PARTNERSHIP**

The national Social Partnership Forum, that brings together the Department of Health, NHS Employers and NHS Trade Unions, has begun a dialogue on how the parties can work together to meet the challenges ahead in the NHS, particularly around the financial projections. Whilst there is much dialogue ahead of us, we have developed a set of core principles that will enable us to develop this work.

We are sharing these principles because we believe they have applicability at all levels in the NHS as Health Authorities, Commissioners and Providers, Staff and their trade union representatives enter into dialogue within their own health economies to find common solutions to the particular challenges that face them.

### **Principles to guide social dialogue**

1. **Build and maintain respect for social partners at national, regional and local level**

***This will involve:***

- The early engagement of partners and working in a 'no surprises' culture
- Problems and issues being transparent and shared between partners
- Recognising that staff and trade unions are part of the solution
- Partners sharing responsibility
- Recognising that partnership working is about collaborating together during the hard times as well as the good and that all partners need to work together to try and ensure the continued quality of patient services and minimize the negative impact of the current financial difficulties on NHS staff.
- All partners being engaged with financial planning and drawing up QIPP options and strategies
- Agreeing joint communications
- Building consensus, negotiating where appropriate and agreeing change

2. **Be clear about appropriate governance**

***This will involve:***

- Taking decisions in right place/level
- Applying national principles and frameworks regionally and locally
- Respecting structures of collective bargaining and UK-wide pay determination through the pay review body process
- Recognising subsidiarity - local partners are usually best placed to make the right local decisions
- Organisations working in partnership to develop and agree change management policies so that employees can have confidence in and knowledge about how change is managed.

3. **Aim for inclusivity**

***This will involve:***

- Finding solutions that respect the position of all staff groups

- Recognising equality and diversity responsibilities
- Maintaining a commitment to trainees and life-long learning
- Supporting students to make the transition into employment
- Working to retain and retrain staff rather than making them redundant

4. **Co-operate for whole-system solutions**

***This will involve:***

- Developing a 'One NHS' approach Health Authorities, Commissioners and Providers working together to maximise job opportunities and minimise transaction costs
- SHAs and Regional SPFs promoting whole system approaches across all health economies
- Trade Unions to promote flexibility and mobility across delivery boundaries
- Promoting common approaches with the devolved administrations and co-operation across employers in border areas.

5. **Work within and build on existing policy commitments**

***This will involve:***

- Respecting Agenda for Change and using the NHS Staff Council to negotiate changes where required
- Building on flexibilities and potential benefits provided for in Agenda for Change and other contractual arrangements
- Applying the Staff Passport where there are employee transfers
- All partners committing to involvement in making difficult decisions about achieving savings and supporting implementation.
- Organisations committing to maximising employment security and Trade Unions committing to promoting workforce flexibility.

6. **Work to retain confidence in the NHS**

***This will involve:***

- Adhering to and embedding the NHS Constitution and pledges
- Ensuring the NHS retains its position as an employer of choice
- Focussing on the delivery of high quality care, productivity and patient safety

*Agreed by the National Social Partnership Forum - 25 February 2010*