

## **Social Partnership Forum – 14 October 2010**

### **Key communications**



### **The NHS Operating Framework and the Government White Paper was the focus of discussions at the October meeting of the national Social Partnership Forum.**

Minister of State, Simon Burns welcomed everyone to the October meeting and in particular new representatives from the BMA and the TUC. He said the meeting would give members an opportunity to hear the latest information on the White Paper – *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*. They would also be informed on the upcoming consultations on the information revolution and greater choice and control for patients.

#### **NHS Operating Framework**

Department of Health (DH) officials spoke on the plans for the NHS Operating Framework for 2011/12. The focus of the Framework will be to set out the prominent issues facing the service over the coming year and to help maintain delivery in times of transition. The Framework will be published towards the end of 2010. Staff side and employers' representatives welcomed the offer of further consultation with the Department. They also acknowledged the difficulties that the Department faced especially as the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review was not known.

#### **Public Health White Paper**

The White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* published by the Government in July announced the creation of a new Public Health Service from 2012. Members of the forum were informed that the Public Health Service will take on all functions of the Health Protection Agency. It would also, along with local authorities, be jointly responsible for appointing Directors of Public Health.

Both staff side and employer representatives welcomed the update. They felt that the proposals would provide an excellent opportunity to better integrate public health at a local level. Staff side raised concerns about the independence of the new Public Health Service. A separate Public Health White Paper, which will be published later this year, should address this issue.

#### **White Paper Consultation update**

Minister, DH, staff side and NHS Employers updated the forum on consultation activities following the publication of the Government's White Paper. All sides welcomed the workshop for SPF members held on 24 September.

## **An information revolution and greater choice and control – White Paper consultation**

DH policy leads presented on two further consultations that would be launched as part of the Government's consultation on proposals in the White Paper.

1. The consultation on [Greater Choice and Control](#) sets out a number of proposals to give patients and service users greater choice and control, including increasing the current offer of choice of healthcare provider, and going further by enabling people to choose a named consultant-led team.
2. [An Information Revolution](#) will stress the importance of high quality data and information and how this could improve patient care.

Forum members discussed both issues in some detail, especially the one around choice. Employer representatives were particularly interested in the proposals to enable patients to choose a named consultant-led team and how this would work in practice. Minister emphasised that both he and his officials were aware of the potential difficulties in how this might work and that the consultation exercise will be used to explore this issue further. DH will seek further input from the SPF after the consultations are published.

## **NHS Staff Health and Well-being and the NHS Occupational Health Services Review**

There was a short discussion about the proposed review of NHS Occupational Health Services. It was agreed that comments be fed back in writing to DH after the meeting. There was general support for a workshop to discuss the matter further.

## **SPF Project/Work Update**

Updates on current SPF projects were given by forum members including: work around the [NHS staff survey](#), the importance of embedding partnership working, a review of the current SPF website and regular work through the [SPF staff passport](#) group around the NHS HR Framework.

## **Knowledge and Skills Framework Review**

The SPF received a progress report on the work to reform and simplify the KSF, making it a more flexible, adaptable tool that employers can tailor to meet local needs. The simplified guidance has been signed off by the NHS Staff Council and the DH, and will shortly be launched to the service.