

2 November 2017

Dear Regional SPF Co-chair,

National SPF priorities 2017 - 2019

The leads from each partner organisation on the national Social Partnership Forum (SPF) wrote to you in April 2016 to inform you of our priorities for the following year. The general election and preceding purdah period impacted on our ability to finalise the national SPF priorities to a similar timescale in 2017. The priorities set out below apply, therefore, until the end of March 2019, although they will be kept under review.

The reason we share our priorities is to provide you with reassurance that employers and trade unions can feed into these important policy areas at a national level - ensuring workforce issues are considered fully. You may also want to use these priorities when considering what issues you will focus on in your forum.

As you can see we have listed the priorities under the three broad headings used in 2016. You will also see that many are the same or similar to those identified previously, as much of our work is ongoing.

The key areas of focus for the national SPF are as follows:

Service transformation

- NHS Five Year Forward View – sustainability and transformation plans/partnerships (STPs) and accountable care systems (ACSS). This includes work to 'de-risk' system change and to remove potential obstacles to staff working across organisations.
- Partnership working - work to support staff and trade union engagement in system change has to-date included producing *Guidance for social partnership working in developing and implementing new care models and system transformation* and a *system change – jargon buster*. See the [Supporting System Change](#) web page on the SPF website for more information.

Service delivery

- Operational productivity and efficiency - the SPF is working with NHS Improvement on its workforce productivity programme. Part of this work will be to encourage employers to ensure any staff affected by organisational productivity initiatives are given relevant information in a timely manner and supported through the process.
- Staff retention and supply, linked to workforce system and planning – the SPF will contribute to the improving staff retention subgroup of the ministerial workforce steering group. The SPF is also working closely with the apprenticeships advisory group.
- Agency reduction programme – the SPF, through its workforce issues group, is working with NHS Improvement to support its programme to reduce the money spent by the NHS on agency staff to an appropriate level.
- Safer staffing improvement – the SPF will contribute to the eight safer staffing resources being developed by NHS Improvement.

NHS culture and staff experience

- Promoting positive cultures and tackling bullying in the NHS: a collective call to action. Since its launch, the national SPF has done a lot to promote the 'call to action' and to encourage responses at an organisational, regional and system level. We have also signposted useful resources to help those working on developing a positive workplace culture in their organisation. See the [tackling bullying web page](#) on the SPF website for more information. We will be reviewing progress with the 'call to action' and identifying next steps at the creating positive cultures summit on 28 November, in the UNISON Centre, London. We hope you can attend this summit.

- Developing people, improving care. The SPF is engaging with NHS Improvement on its national strategic framework for action on improvement and leadership, as good leadership and management are critical components in ensuring a positive workplace culture.

The national SPF agreed that leadership and workforce culture was a “golden thread”, which linked all the priority areas and that international workforce issues needed to be a cross-cutting theme over the next 18 months, at least.

There are other policies that impact on the NHS workforce, which we have not included in the above priorities. This is because social partnership working is happening in other fora, outside of the SPF. We will, however, continue to link with this work to ensure the voices of employers and trade unions are able to influence the development and implementation of these policies.

We hope you find this information useful and we can maintain the close links between the regional SPFs and the national forum. Next year, we will continue with the visits by national SPF representatives to the regional SPFs, as we have had feedback that these are useful and help the co-ordination of work between the national and regional levels.

We believe strongly that the regional SPFs continue to have a key role in ensuring social partnership working is taking place at an organisational and multi-employer level. They bring system leaders together at a regional level - providing support and guidance so trusts, STPs and devolution areas can maximise the benefits of the social partnership approach.

The regional SPFs also provide a forum where learning and good practice can be shared. If you identify any good practice, please pass on to the SPF Project Manager Victoria.small@nhsemployers.org so we can promote this nationally. If it is an exemplar example of partnership working, you may also want to encourage those involved to enter the HPMA award for partnership working, which the SPF is once again sponsoring. The award process will be launched at the end of November. We will provide more information in due course.

Finally, we would like to thank you, and all those in your regional SPF, for the time and effort you put into the forum. We rely on employers, trade unions and colleagues in the Arm’s Length Bodies to come together in a region to make their SPF a success, and we are very grateful to all those that do.

Yours sincerely,

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