April 2020

The Social Partnership Forum brings together NHS Employers, NHS trade unions, Health Education England, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to contribute to the development and implementation of policy that impacts on the health workforce.

**Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The national SPF has set up a new web page on coronavirus (COVID-19) to share important information on related NHS workforce issues and provide updates on SPF activity in response to the pandemic. You can access the web page [here](https://www.socialpartnershipforum.org).

**National Social Partnership Form (SPF) statement on industrial relations during the pandemic**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) poses enormous challenges for the NHS workforce. As a result, partnership working in organisations may need to be streamlined and organisational change, employment processes and industrial disputes put on hold. You can read more on these requested new ways of working during the current crisis, in a full statement from the SPF [here](https://www.socialpartnershipforum.org).

**COVID-19 guidance for NHS workforce leaders**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I), Public Health England (PHE), Health Education England and NHS Employers have collated the latest COVID-19 workforce advice into [one central resource](https://www.socialpartnershipforum.org). This resource provides advice on people returning to the NHS; staff, pay and terms and conditions, wellbeing and movement; as well as reiterating the importance of partnership working. The resource will be updated regularly to reflect the latest advice during a rapidly evolving situation.

**NHS Wellbeing resources**

NHS England and NHS improvement (NHSE/I) have compiled a number of useful mental health and wellbeing resources, which are all being offered for free to NHS staff until the end of December this year. To find out more about these apps, including how NHS staff can claim free access, follow [this link](https://www.socialpartnershipforum.org).
19 March SPF Wider Group meeting
The latest SPF Wider Group meeting was held virtually on 19 March. It focused almost exclusively on the coronavirus situation. Prof Keith Willett, Medical Director, Acute Care and Preparedness and National Strategic Incident Director for COVID-19 for the NHS, provided an overview of current planning and response in the NHS. This included a clear explanation of how the virus works, spreads and affects people and why that requires the current actions and response (you can see a video of Keith’s simple and informative explanation [here](#)). He answered questions from SPF members, including around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Gavin Larner and Angie Walsh from DHSC also provided an overview of departmental planning around workforce issues, including on developing new HR guidance for the COVID-19 situation. Gavin confirmed publication of the NHS People Plan would be delayed until later this year, but work on NHS staff health and wellbeing will be ramped up in advance of the launch.

A short summary and key comms from the meeting can be found on the SPF website

13 February SPF Strategic Group meeting
The latest meeting of the SPF Strategic Group – the second of the year - took place on 13 February 2020. Ben Dyson, Programme Director for People Plan at NHSE/I, discussed the latest People Plan developments followed by a session on NHS Horizons work to apply social movement principles to the roll out of the Plan, led by NHSE/I’s John Drew. Rob Webster (Chief Executive of South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust & Lead Chief Executive West Yorkshire and Harrogate ICS & Chair of the new operating model for workforce workstream) led a helpful discussion with members on the New Operating Model for the system. The meeting also briefly covered the prospective consultation on the reform of professional regulators and the healthcare landscape post EU exit.

Violence Reduction Subgroup – 11 March
The second violence reduction subgroup of the year was held via teleconference on 11 March. Harprit Hockley, lead for organisational development at NHSE/I, updated the group on the evaluation of body worn camera pilot, thoughts on the staff survey 2019 results and supporting staff and organisations through the process of reporting abuse. The group is due to meet again on 19 May.
HPMA Awards 2020
Once again, the SPF are sponsoring this year’s HPMA award for partnership working between employers and trade unions. The submission date for applications was 18 February, and we had a fantastic 15 entries. Our judges met shortly afterwards to narrow the entries down to a shortlist for the SPF award. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the judging day and awards have been postponed until later in the year. The SPF would like to thank everyone for their fantastic contributions and remind everyone to keep an eye on SPF communications for further updates on this year’s awards.

SPF Stocktake
In January, the national SPF received the results of an independent stocktake, carried out by the Involvement and Partnership Association (IPA) in 2019. The stocktake consisted of interviews with national SPF (NSPF) stakeholders, observation of meetings and the review of relevant documentation. The stocktake found that the areas for improvement from the last independent stocktake (taken in 2015) have been comprehensively addressed. A comparison with other social partnerships in the UK public sector – the Public Services Forum, the Civil Services Forum, and social partnership in Scotland and Wales, demonstrates that the NSPF remains an exemplar model.