

SPF Wider Group key comms – 14 September

Welcome and Introductions – Chair - Helen Whately MS(C)

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the challenges on the workforce and spoke about the upcoming challenge of winter pressures, along with recovery, and the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Minister then reiterated the importance of listening to staff, supporting their health and wellbeing and recruitment to grow the workforce.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme and Race Ahead series - Jenni Douglas-Todd, NHSE/I

Jenni spoke on NHSE/I's equality, diversity and inclusion programme, supporting the 'belonging' pillar of the NHS People Plan, and took the group through the upcoming Race Ahead series. This work was originally planned for one week but is now spread across the whole of October, which is also Black History Month. Jenni ran through of the programme, with themes for each week focusing on:

- Week 1 – Identity
- Week 2 – Leadership
- Week 3 – Health and wellbeing
- Week 4 – Launch of race equality strategy

View slides from Jenni's [presentation](#), as well as [promotional images](#) and [key dates](#)

Danny Mortimer, employer chair, highlighted the important role of the regional SPFs in the implementation of the race equality strategy. Sara Gorton, trade union chair, commented that trade unions could supplement this work with products they have produced in this area. She also mentioned a resource being developed by the NHS Staff Council that could be circulated as part of the programme.

Regional/local NHS case study – South West regional SPF

Sara Penter and Leah Brewer of Cornwall Partnership FT presented on their work implementing a just and learning culture in the trust. In 2019, Amanda Oates of Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust presented at a regional network meeting and inspired the local HRDs to bring just and learning culture into their trust, to address challenges in the trust's disciplinary processes. The trust worked in partnership with trade union colleagues to revise their disciplinary processes, meaning that staff going through disciplinary procedures were engaged and informed from the beginning of the process. This work has led to significant drops in disciplinary cases, suspensions and dismissals, as well the trust being nominated for the HPMA 2021 SPF award for partnership working. Trade union colleagues welcomed the approach of this trust and relayed positive feedback they have had for this work from representatives in the area. Caroline Haynes stated this had been discussed with the South East Regional SPF, so the learning was being shared.

ICS Implementation and the Health and Care Bill

Rachel Markey, deputised for Philippa Baker stated the Bill has now entered committee stage at House of Commons. It is expected to enter House of Lords around November. There has generally been positive feedback from stakeholders around direction of travel and DHSC is keen to continue engaging with stakeholders, including the SPF.

Elizabeth Wade stated the HR design framework published in June set out high level expectations of ICSs, subject to the Bill being passed. Jacqueline Davies set out the latest position about the senior appointment process with adverts for 42 new ICS chief executives now live.

Trade union colleagues echoed the importance of diversity in these emerging roles, and the importance of communication and engagement with staff through the transition process, to avoid uncertainty whilst the bill is being passed.

The ICS transition partnership group, a subgroup of the national SPF, has been meeting for almost four months, looking at elements of the transition affecting workforce. The group has supported the development of practical guidance documents. The partnership group has met with Regional SPFs Chairs to appraise them with the development of guidance documents.

2021 annual National NHS Staff Survey/People Promise – John Drew, NHSE/I

John Drew gave an update on the People Promise, and how this feeds into the NHS Staff Survey, and recent staff feedback from the quarterly and monthly people pulse surveys. The 2021 NHS Staff Survey has been adapted slightly, informed by the People Promise. The survey should be an intrinsic part of how trusts work throughout the year, not a warning sign which is heeded once a year. Workload is seen as biggest challenge to health and wellbeing of staff. This cannot be effectively tackled by health and wellbeing initiatives alone, but by recruitment and retention, and new and flexible ways of working.

Preparing for winter - Dr Jenny Harries, UKHSA, Iain Pickles, NHSE/I

Jenny Harries stated that the UK health security agency (UKHSA) will be formally launched on 1 October, created from the Joint Biosecurity Centre, PHE and NHS Test and Trace. This will be a science and technology focused organisation, involving data and analytics, genomics and hazard detection, identifying new emerging infections. The approach of this organisation will also make customer service in healthcare delivery a priority.

The Chief Medical Officer presented the winter strategy at the time of this meeting, committing to the delivery of free PCR and lateral flow testing, and support for people who were isolating because of COVID-19.

Iain Pickles stated there are three core elements to the NHS plan for winter. These include demand and capacity, how to manage and monitor what is happening in the system, and how to communicate with the public and workforce. Elective activity should be broadly in line with winter 2019/20, allowing flexibility to react to unknowns as well as the impact of flu and Covid-19.

Switching to a winter operating model will be on 1 October. The national ambulance coordination centre is the best live indicator of pressures on healthcare system. The winter comms strategy will build on messaging from last year, focussing on the public accessing the right services for them.

SPF Stocktake Report 2020/21 – SPF co-chairs

The SPF stocktake report was signed off and agreed by both staff and management-side co-chairs.

Any Other Business

Sara Gorton voiced concerns on behalf of the trade unions, in respect of the recently published consultation seeking views on making the covid vaccination as a condition of deployment.