

By Email
23/05/2022

To: Regional SPF co-chairs

National SPF priorities 2022/23

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to let you know the national SPF priorities for this financial year, so you can make connections with your region's work areas to support a co-ordinated approach.

The national SPF co-chairs and wider group members are grateful for the excellent work that you and your colleagues are undertaking in the regional SPFs – see box below.

- *The Yorkshire & Humber SPF has engaged several speakers on topics such as workforce planning, EDI, and employee relations to collectively promote and influence partnership working. Yorkshire & Humber are also the region in which the winners of the 2021 HPMA Partnership Working Award are based.*
- *The North East and North Cumbria SPF has named health inequalities in the region their network priority for the year and are proceeding with this agenda through engaging with topical speakers and planning for a regional workshop to develop objectives and actions.*
- *The North West SPF has worked in partnership on topics such as domestic violence, violence/aggression prevention, workforce planning and health & wellbeing to influence regional approaches and national consultations.*
- *South East SPF is working with the University of Sussex on the AgiLab Research Project: Attending to the agile working needs of NHS staff with lower socio-economic status.*
- *South West SPF is embedding a just and learning culture and improving equality, diversity and inclusion across the region, and this was the focus of an inclusion and belonging workshop held in November 2021.*
- *East of England SPF's ongoing efforts to continue anti-racism discussions and national drive to imbed 'no more tick boxes', which is strongly evidence based on fair recruitment and career progression and something ICS workforce leads have been tasked with implementing as a key priority.*
- *West Midlands SPF's key focus on embedding and moving forward with the just and learning culture piece and is discussing a future sponsorship piece which would include collaborative working as a region.*
- *East Midlands SPF's focus on challenges of managing long covid and working together as a region to share best practice and frameworks.*
- *London SPF continues to be really active in its health and wellbeing ambition and has had a focus on inclusion and is championing the #InclusiveHR 5 Step Challenge for Change to improve the experience of BAME staff in HR & OD functions.*

In 2022/23 the national SPF will focus on the recovery of NHS services – ensuring staff experience and welfare is at the forefront of minds when related policy is developed and implemented. We will also continue to support the NHS COVID-19 response and activity resulting from the emergence of any new variants, which leads to increased pressures on health services.

We are considering the NHS Staff Survey results 2021 and will use these to identify where the national SPF can support activity to tackle areas of concern. The overall aim being to improve the experience at work for staff – for the benefit of them and their patients. This in turn should have a positive knock-on impact on staff retention and help address the workload pressure the service is facing.

Informed by the Staff Survey results, the national SPF will continue to have a role in initiatives aimed at supporting the health and wellbeing of staff, increasing civility and respect in the NHS, and preventing and reducing violence to keep staff safe. We will also have a strong focus on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and will link in with NHSEI colleagues on progressing their national EDI strategy and related actions plans, and the work on inclusive recruitment and promotion practices. We know that these are also areas that regional SPFs are focused on.

We urge employers and trade unions at a regional level to use the findings of the Staff Survey to inform your work and to encourage organisational level social partnership working, using their local results, along with monthly and quarterly pulse surveys, to identify problem areas and seek to address issues.

You may be aware that NHSEI and HEE are refreshing the Long Term Plan and developing an NHS workforce strategy. The national SPF will be involved in the development of these as they will have an important impact on the workforce in the short to medium term.

Regarding the workforce over the next 15 years, we are collaborating with HEE on their long-term strategic framework for health and social care workforce planning and will support recommendations arising from this.

Other areas the national SPF will be engaged in include career development in the NHS linked to staff retention; the future of NHS HR and OD programme being led by NHSEI; the NHS Covenant, the development of which is being led by NHS Employers on behalf of the Government; the role of the NHS as an anchor institution in communities and linked to this workforce supply and maximising NHS apprenticeships.

Since April 2021, the SPF's Integrated Care Systems, Transition Partnership Group (TPG) has been enabling employers and trade unions to get involved in the workforce elements arising from the Health and Care Bill in respect to staff transferring to integrated care boards (ICBs).

The periodic meetings between the TPG and yourselves have been helpful in information sharing and highlighting issues. As you will be aware we have launched principles for ICB partnership machinery with recognised trade unions to support pre and post-transfer consultation with staff and their trade union representatives, alongside a template framework and agreement that ICBs can use for their internal forums for working in partnership with trade unions. These resources are available on the [SPF website](#).

Following the Health and Care Act 2022, the national SPF will consider the potential role of system-based people functions and workforce strategies and what this may mean for local and regional partnership working and we will look forward to engaging with you on this later this year.

We will continue our programme of visits from members of the national SPF to the regional SPFs to provide updates on national work and enable the flow of information between the regional and national forums. If you are interested in having a national rep on the agenda of one of your upcoming meetings, please raise this with your NHS Employers colleagues and they will take this forward.

As always, if you are aware of successful partnership working between employers and trade unions, please share this wider through your NHS Employers secretariat, who will connect with the national SPF secretariat. They will be able to identify how best to share learning and encourage others to adopt the good practice.

Thank you for ensuring effective regional social partnership working in the NHS. Through your efforts you are supporting staff to deliver better patient care and more effective services.

Yours sincerely,



Sara Gorton
Head of Health
UNISON
Trade Union SPF Chair



Danny Mortimer
Chief Executive
NHS Employers
Employer SPF Chair