

Members' behaviour

The SPF and its subgroup meetings are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect even when the partners disagree over a specific issue. The following guidelines provide some agreed ground rules to support a positive and constructive working environment:

- Wherever possible keep the language simple and avoid jargon. If you do not fully understand an issue, ensure that you seek clarification before agreeing or disagreeing.
- Respect other members of the forum as individuals with equal rights.
- Recognise and respect the responsibilities that individuals have as representatives of their respective partner organisations.
- Where appropriate, maintain confidentiality on issues of a sensitive nature and where agreed, do not share confidential papers outside of the meeting. If an issue is potentially sensitive, agree how and when it will be communicated externally. During the meetings individuals have the right to express opinions without having their views quoted outside of the meeting.
- Strive for consensus as far as possible. Sharing of information should be encouraged and enough time allowed for meaningful discussion.
- Where a consensus is not reached but a recommendation still must be made, the divergence of views needs to be clearly noted.

As a member of the national SPF or one of its subgroups, you represent one of the partners i.e. NHS Employers, NHS Trade Unions, HEE, NHSEI, DHSC (not the SPF as a whole). As an SPF member you should use your judgement, guided by the principles of partnership working, to engage with your own constituents outside the group as and when necessary. Each partner organisation has its own processes in place for gathering wider views to input into discussions.

Representatives should:

- use their judgement to engage with their colleagues and constituents for views/feedback to inform social partnership discussions

- promote the benefits of social partnership working at a national, regional, system and organisational level
- be involved in the annual programme of regional visits.

The SPF undertakes stocktakes to identify where it is working well and areas for improvement. In 2015, an independent report of the SPF undertaken by the Involvement and Participation Association (IPA) found that it 'remains one of the most advanced forms of industrial partnership in the British public sector'. In a follow-up stocktake conducted by IPA in 2019, they found, in comparison with other social partnerships in the UK public sector, the national SPF remained an exemplar model.

In addition to the stocktake, a review of communications, including the website, is undertaken periodically to identify how the SPF can better communicate information on the benefits of partnership working, the work of the national and regional SPFs and the impact of this work.