

# Key comms

---

## Social Partnership Forum (SPF) Wider Group

21 June 2023

The meeting was chaired by Will Quince, the minister of state for health, he opened the face to face meeting by acknowledging the constructive relationships that were maintained amidst the pressures on pay and other issues. The minister also highlighted the key role that the SPF has played in policy areas such as the Major Conditions Strategy, Urgent and Emergency Care Review and the NHS Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) improvement plan.

### **SPF violence reduction subgroup update - Alan Lofthouse, UNISON**

The minister welcomed Alan to update on the work of the national SPF's violence reduction subgroup (VRS) and stated that no one should go to work fearing violence. Alan, co-chair of the VRS subgroup, talked through a paper which covered the work of the subgroup and the violence prevention and reduction team in NHS England (NHSE), the non-pay element of the NHS pay deal around reducing violence, and what NHS Employers is doing to identify and share good practice in violence prevention and reduction. Alan asked questions to understand what more the SPF and the subgroup can do to reduce and prevent violence and abuse against NHS staff.

Danny Mortimer, chief executive at NHS Employers, pointed towards examples of great work done on violence. Caroline Haynes highlighted the [Sussex ICS violence prevention and reduction strategy](#). Sussex Health and Care launched its strategy in April 2023. This was developed at an ICS level to be used by organisations within the ICS. All of its provider trusts are signed up. The strategy has a public health and trauma-informed approach at its core. A violence prevention and reduction strategy is key to the successful implementation of the [Violence Prevention and Reduction \(VPR\) Standard](#), which was co-produced by NHSE and the SPF. Caroline highlighted the importance of taking a local approach and looking at the challenges in the different settings in which



care is provided, for example often incidents that take place in a community setting often go unreported.

The minister emphasised that driving cultural change in organisations would be the key to policies being implemented successfully.

Claire Gore, NHSE, said the EDI improvement plan was published a couple of weeks ago and one of the high impact actions is to create positive workplace cultures where bullying and violence are addressed. She said part of the plan is to introduce an accountability framework, which would sit at local, regional, system and national levels. Claire added that NHSE has commissioned Liverpool John Moores University to investigate what data is needed to track improvements as the NHS is over-reliant on the NHS Staff Survey.

Sara Gorton, head of health at UNISON, welcomed the work on data sets. She said the SPF wanted a system-wide approach to tackling violence but DHSC has responsibility to put together what sits where, what needs to be done, and how it is measured and reported. The minister accepted this as a fair challenge and there had to be accountability and DHSC had the responsibility but NHSE and others have the levers.

Trade union representatives raised concerns about under-reporting, highlighting that not all trusts have the same engagement with the board on this issue. Another member raised that some unions have done their own surveys and they have shown that staff don't always officially report. There were also indications that confidence in managers was low for staff that had been bullied and they might leave/resign because they didn't feel safe. Union members pointed out that change was needed in the workplace culture. The minister agreed and mentioned that people sometimes don't leave a trust but leave a manager.

Danny Mortimer acknowledged the need to focus on all the above points but also highlighted that the current VPR Standard is sensible. It was unfortunate that the standard was released around the time of the pandemic so the next steps would be to bring this back to the forefront with clear accountability, drivers and relaunching the standard and accepting the need for greater accountability.

### **HPMA 2022 partnership working award finalist case study - Raffaella Goodby/Jo Vaughan, Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust**

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust worked with trade union representatives to develop a pregnancy loss policy which was the runner-up at HPMA awards in 2022.

Raffaella Goodby, chief people officer, and Jo Vaughan, staff side, presented their case study, which highlighted the importance and success of partnership working and they played compelling video testimonies from staff who had benefited from the policy. They said by taking a partnership approach they were able to learn from each other and have insight and intelligence that would be key in understanding and making decisions. One of the key challenges faced was getting rid of the taboo around women's health issues. Feedback from staff, managers and unions highlighted that the policy was positive as it was not just words but a practical document. This approach has also been adopted by other organisations including 35 trusts and two police forces.

The minister thanked Raffaella and Jo for their presentation and encouraged all those trusts that didn't have a pregnancy loss policy to adopt Birmingham Women's and Children NHS Foundation Trust's policy.

This case study of successful partnership working was well received by trade union representatives and employer representatives alike. A trade union representative mentioned that this could be a positive step forward for people to start opening up on other taboo issues. An employer representative mentioned the catalyst to bringing policies to life is through the opening up of conversations and people feeling comfortable to talk about their personal circumstances.

### **Update from SPF meetings**

#### Tackling sexual misconduct in the NHS - Sara Gorton, head of health, UNISON

Sara informed the group about the growing concerns about sexual misconduct in the NHS that have emerged from sources such as the [BMJ report](#) that showed the level of sexual assaults in the NHS over a five-year period. This has coincided with work being carried out on sexual misconduct in the ambulance service as well as in the surgical sector. Sara wanted to get some early views from the SPF on how to approach this issue. Partners will be holding further discussions on how the SPF can support tackling sexual safety and misconduct.

Danny Mortimer said tackling sexual misconduct is a priority area for Navina Evans, NHSE, and pointed towards work being done by the GMC. Danny highlighted that this is a concern in many workplaces, not just the NHS.

A trade union representative mentioned that there were examples of sexual misconduct where everyone knew what was happening in the organisation but nothing



was done so it might be a case of looking at the leadership culture, tone-setting and interventions. He said this would likely improve the impact of the complaints.

An employer representative highlighted that when there is a case of sexual misconduct then it usually isn't the first time so there is potential for a deeper dive into some cases. A safeguarding lead could support work on finding a broader view of repeat behaviours.

The forum agreed addressing sexual misconduct in the NHS should be a priority for the SPF.

#### Partnership working during industrial action - Danny Mortimer, chief executive, NHS Employers

Danny spoke about the importance of maintaining partnership discussions during industrial action and emphasised the key ongoing role of partnership working in organisational change aimed at service improvement.

Employer representatives echoed Danny's words and added that partnership working is core to everything they do and it makes planning and implementation easier when everyone is on the same page and working together.

The SPF staff side and employer co-chairs agreed that the Long-Term Workforce Plan would continue to drive the SPF's priorities going forward and that years of working in partnership in the SPF, not least during the pandemic, has stood the forum in good stead during the recent disputes.

#### SPF Strategic Group meeting held 17 May 2023 - Sara Gorton, head of health, UNISON

Sara briefly mentioned what was discussed at the last Strategic Group meeting:

- Update on the Long-Term Workforce Plan which was at the final stages
- Cathy Morgan, spoke about the major conditions strategy and asked for members' views on how to support with the strategy
- Patricia Hewitt spoke about her review of ICSS
- NHS Charities Together, who had a prevailing theme of supporting staff and wellbeing.

#### SPF workshop on the 2022 NHS Staff Survey results

Danny Mortimer reflected on a helpful SPF workshop and said there was real value in people filling in the staff survey and mentioned how this will drive future conversations and priorities in the SPF.

Details of all the NHS@75 celebrations were circulated with the meeting papers.