

London Social Partnership Forum (SPF)

Terms of reference

The London Social Partnership Forum (SPF) was originally set up by the employers, trade unions and the former Strategic Health Authority to pursue their common purpose of developing a world class health service delivered by a world class NHS workforce in London. It now forms part of the Regional Social Partnership Forums which are supported by NHS Employers' National Engagement Service.

Effective partnership working will produce important benefits. These include improved services for patients and users and ensuring high standards of employment practices in the health services in London.

The London SPF will ensure that the principles underpinning the National SPE Partnership Agreement framework, agreed by the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS Employers and NHS trade unions, operate effectively within the London region.

The forum recognises respective roles and responsibilities, establishes shared values and common purpose, and sets key principles for effective joint working. It provides the basis for a continually improving partnership which will lead to long-term solutions that work for staff and, more importantly, for users.

These principles are underpinned by the NHS Constitution.

Aims and values

The London SPF aims to provide a modern partnership approach to issues affecting the NHS workforce where a London-wide view is needed or would be useful. It will:

- Contribute trade union and employer perspectives to the development and implementation of policy.



- Provide constructive comments on implementation at a formative stage.
- Contribute ideas on the workforce implications of the implementation of policy.
- Promote effective communications between partners.
- Promote good practice across London.
- Feed London region views into national groups including the NHS Staff Council and the National Social Partnership Forum.
- Contribute to the strengthening of commissioning within London.
- Keep the patient at the centre of everything we do.

Roles and responsibilities

To enable effective operation of these partnership arrangements, the partners agree to recognise and respect each other's roles and functions which are distinct but complementary. The partners recognise that:

- NHS organisations have responsibility for implementing national policy.
- Trade unions have a responsibility to represent and act in the interest of their members.
- Other stakeholders will have views which will need to be considered.

Shared approach

This partnership agreement is underpinned by shared values and common purpose, including:

- A commitment to continuous improvement, including access to high quality services and delivering value for money to the public.
- A belief that the NHS should promote good practice in all areas of staff management, including equality and diversity, staff development and a commitment to security of employment.
- Agreement that the NHS should take a collective approach to support staff who may be affected by service changes.

Working arrangements

Principles for effective joint working

All partners recognise the importance of good formal and informal working relations, built on trust and shared responsibility, while still respecting difference. All partners commit to adopt these principles:

- Building trust and a mutual respect for each other's roles and responsibilities.
- A positive and constructive approach.
- Early discussion of emerging issues and maintaining dialogue on policy and priorities.
- Openness, honesty and transparency in communications.
- Where appropriate, confidentiality and agreed external positions.
- Making the best use of resources.

Mandate

The representatives of NHS employers in London will be endorsed by, and receive their mandate from, the London CPO network.

Membership

Membership of the forum will comprise:

- Representatives of NHS employers in London, from a cross-section of organisations and job roles including chief people officers and associate directors
- An employer's and a London Health Unions lead from the Integrated Care System
- Representatives from London trade unions party to the Agenda for Change agreement, plus the British Medical Association, Managers in Partnership and Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
- NHS Employers and Arms-Length Bodies (ALBs)
- NHS England

The London SPF may set up ad-hoc working groups from time to time to consider particular issues where a London view is required.

Trade union representatives

Union side membership will be filled by representatives from the following organisations:

- London health unions
- UNISON
- The Royal College of Nursing
- The Royal College of Midwives
- Unite
- GMB
- The Union of Shop, Allied and Distributive Workers
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- The Community and District Nursing Association
- The Society of Radiographers
- The Federation of Clinical Scientists
- The British Association of Occupational Therapists
- The Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
- The British Orthoptic Society
- The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists
- The British Dietetic Association
- Managers in Partnership
- The British Medical Association
- Hospital Consultants & Specialists Association

Other associated health and care partners to be invited/included at the discretion of the joint chairs.

Meeting logistics

Frequency of meetings

The partnership will meet four times a year. The commitment as an employer rep is to attend at least 50 per cent of these meetings as well as the manager's pre-meet prior to the main meeting. Short-life subgroups will be formed to undertake specific pieces of work between meetings, including:

- The Job Evaluation Subgroup
- The Policy Subgroup

- Recruitment and Retention Premia Subgroup
- The Health and Wellbeing Subgroup

Chairing arrangements

The forum will be jointly chaired by one staff side chair and one management side chair. The joint chairs will be responsible for the development of meeting agendas and review of the efficacy of the forum, supported by NHS Employers.

Facilitation

The secretariat for the forum will be provided by the National Engagement Service (London team) at NHS Employers. Every effort will be made to provide information in good time for discussion or consultation.

Communication

- All partners undertake to respect confidentiality where that is required or requested; and to conduct their dialogue openly.
- Joint public communications will be agreed from time to time. At the close of each meeting the group should be clear on the agreed communication points for wider dissemination.
- All communications published in partnership should be circulated via NHS Employers/CPOs Network and London health unions concurrently.

Review

There will be an annual review of these terms of reference and arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The next review will be in January 2026.