

East of England Social Partnership Forum (SPF)

Terms of reference

The East of England Social Partnership Forum (EoE SPF) is a partnership between NHS organisations and trade union representatives in the region. It mirrors and supports the national arrangements for partnership working on all workforce implications.

The role of this forum is to work in partnership, involving employer and staff organisations in meaningfully considering future changes that impact more than one organisation and identifying the workforce implications of these. It allows for frank debate and exchanges regarding the development of the NHS workforce across the East of England.

The forum will not pursue matters that affect single organisations unless they have wider impact across the region affecting other employers, but may, with agreement, provide a forum for negotiated agreement across organisations.

Aims

The forum will in particular:

- Embed the role of trade unions in underpinning effective employee engagement.
- Understand the workforce implications of strategic developments and coordinate responses where appropriate.
- Embed and promote partnership working locally, with a focus on sharing best practice and facilitating meaningful discussions.
- Prioritise areas for action which will have greatest impact on staff engagement.
- Support the work of the national social partnership mechanisms and staff council.
- Agree where region-wide consultation or a best practice approach under the auspices of the group and these terms of reference would be possible and of benefit.



- Work together to maintain the key principles of Agenda for Change and other national contracts.

Working arrangements

Principles for effective joint working

To deliver successful partnership working it is important to develop good formal and informal working relations that build trust and share responsibility, while respecting difference. To support this, all parties commit to adopt the following principles in their dealings with each other:

- We won't always agree but will commit to keep talking.
- Continue to share information in a meaningful way.
- Have open communication.
- Work together to get the best for patients and our NHS people in the East of England.
- Ensure each member is clear about who gives them their mandate for joint working.
- Be clear which agenda we are leading; national, regional or local health community.
- Be clear whether we are discussing issues for information, a specific policy direction for implementation, issues which require resolution or items to demonstrate lessons learned.
- Recognise the primary responsibility for managing relationships in employment is between employer and its employees.

Membership

Membership of the forum will comprise trade union representatives, employers, commissioners and Arms' Length Bodies (ALBs), more specifically to include:

Management representatives

Management representatives will include:

- Chief people officers from NHS trusts/providers in the East of England or a nominated senior workforce representative
- Local leaders from NHS England and NHS Employers
- ICB chief people officer or a nominated senior workforce representative
- Other appropriate employer representatives.

Trade union representatives

Trade Union Representatives will include:

- UNISON
- The Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
- The Royal College of Midwives (RCM)
- Unite
- GMB
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)
- The Society of Radiographers (SoR)
- The College of Podiatrists (CoP)
- Managers in Partnership (MiP)
- The British Medical Association (BMA)
- Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA)
- British Dental Association.

Other associated health and care partners to be invited/included at the discretion of the joint chairs. In circumstances where absence is unavoidable, network members may send a named deputy who can represent the relevant organisation.

Meeting logistics

Frequency of meetings

The forum will meet bi-monthly, online via Microsoft Teams, with the possibility of one in person meeting per financial year.

Chairing arrangements

Both trade union and management side colleagues are required to nominate a chair(s). Chairing responsibilities of the meeting will alternate between the management and staff-side co-chairs.

Facilitation

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

Communication

- Joint public communications will be agreed from time to time. At the close of each meeting, the group should be clear on the agreed key communication points for wider dissemination.

- All partners undertake to respect confidentiality where required or requested; and otherwise to conduct their dialogue openly.
- When stated, Chatham House rules are to be observed for specific items on our agendas.

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 March 2026.

