

Wider Group key comms – September 2025

Welcome and introductions

The Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care, Karin Smyth, chaired the meeting. She acknowledged the passing of Sean O’Sullivan, RCM, who was a long-standing contributor to the SPF’s work, and expressed her condolences to his friends and family.

The Minister also announced that [Dr Zubir Ahmed MP](#) has joined the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) ministerial team as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

10-Year Workforce Plan– Gavin Larner, DHSC

SPF engagement

The 10-Year Workforce Plan (10YWP) will be developed to align with the objectives of the [10-Year Health Plan](#) (10YHP). Jo Lenaghan, NHS England (NHSE), will be the Senior Responsible Officer. DHSC/NHSE will shortly issue a [call for evidence](#) inviting stakeholders to help to shape the plan.

A deep dive session is scheduled for the SPF Strategic Group meeting on 15 October, with subsequent workshops planned on specific elements of the plan.

The proposed content for the 10YWP plan includes:

- the strategic case for change
- the technical and operational model, including the new DHSC/NHSE architecture and projected staff numbers
- policy implications and pace of delivery over the next 10 years
- the delivery plan by profession.



Staff standards

The 10YHP explicitly commits to working in partnership with the SPF to develop a new set of staff standards, which will outline minimum standards for modern employment, with the aim to create a more positive experience for employees. The intention is to introduce the standards in April 2026.

SPF Wider Group members had been invited to a staff standards workshop on 24 September, led by DHSC, to clarify the core aims of the standards and understand the timeframe for implementation. A new task and finish group is proposed, to be chaired by Rebecca Smith, NHS Employers, and Jon Restell, MiP, to ensure stakeholder engagement and close alignment with the DHSC/NHSE project team.

System transformation – Richard Barker, DHSC, Glen Burley and Hannah Iqbal, NHSE

DHSC/NHSE merger

The new senior leadership structure has been agreed and recruitment for posts has begun. Richard Barker explained that as 50 per cent of the DHSC/NHSE workforce will be reduced, a proportion of this reduction will come from unfilled vacancies and voluntary redundancy. Final decisions on which roles will remain according to business needs will be made shortly, and trade union colleagues and employees will be engaged with shortly thereafter.

Model region blueprint

The [model region blueprint](#) aims to support delivery of the 10YHP by providing strategic leadership, performance management and improvement and intervention. Colleagues from Integrated Care Boards had been asked to input into the model. FAQs will be released shortly.

Trade unions and employers highlighted the need for a clear plan for the transfer of functions, with a realistic timetable. They stressed how the lack of clarity, especially on funding for redundancies, is negatively impacting on the process. They emphasised the need for NHS staff to be shown respect and how the uncertainty is leading to increased staff sickness and staff with valuable skills leaving the NHS. The Minister thanked the group for their candour and acknowledged the concerns raised.

A meeting between the SPF Wider Group and Sir Jim Mackey, NHSE, is scheduled for 16 October. This will provide a further opportunity for trade union reps and employers to seek clarity and give feedback on the ongoing system changes.

SPF National Regional Group report – Liz Cooke, Norfolk Community Health & Care NHS Trust and Nick Entwistle, SPF Trade Union Secretariat Lead

The National Regional Group (NRG), comprising members of the national SPF, regional SPF co-chairs, NHSE workforce directors and NHS Employers colleagues, met on 2 July to discuss the importance of partnership working in the context of the system changes.

Nick Entwistle updated the Wider Group on this meeting and highlighted the continuing need for collaborative policy conversations. He referenced the new DHSC and NHSE positions on the role of regions, set out in the [model blueprint](#), in “co-ordinating region-wide employee relations” and highlighted the importance of considering how to work with the regional SPFs to discuss effective partnership working at regional level. He commended NHS Employers’ national engagement service and its work to support the regional SPFs, on behalf of regional trade union co-chairs.

Liz Cooke gave a brief overview of [East of England Regional SPF’s achievements](#), with examples of work on anti-racism, improving sexual safety and nursing job profiles.

SPF Co-chairs’ updates – Danny Mortimer, NHS Employers and Helga Pile, UNISON

The timeline for the [employment rights bill](#) has been published. Helga Pile emphasised the need to work together on its implementation.

Danny Mortimer advised that in response to the increased number of racist incidents experienced by NHS colleagues, the SPF would [issue a statement](#) (published 25 September 2025).

The next Wider Group meeting will be held on 11 December 2025.

Learn more about the [SPF Wider Group](#).