

Midlands & East SPF Conference 3 December 2025

National SPF update

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About the national SPF

Our Aims

- Contribute staff side and employer perspectives to emerging policy at a formative stage.
- Improve policy development and implementation by contributing ideas on workforce implications.
- Promote good practice in relation to partnership working and effective communication between partners.

Our priorities for 2025/26

- Workforce related elements in the 10 Year Health Plan; developing a new set of NHS staff standards outlining minimum standards for modern employment and making connections with changes resulting from the Employment Rights Bill.
- The development of the 10 Year Workforce Plan.
- The workforce implications of organisational change and financial reductions in ICB and provider trusts.
- Ensuring effective partnership working mechanisms are built into the new structures.
- Taking forward the recommendations from the SPF report on ways to tackle and reduce violence against NHS staff.

Links with the regional SPFs

SPF Wider Group

Chaired by a health minister, this is the senior SPF group. It is made up of a broad membership which includes representatives from all the NHS trade unions. Meetings enable involvement in priority policies, where there are implications for the workforce, and the celebration of successful local and regional partnership working.

SPF Strategic Group

Led by co-chairs representing NHS Employers and trade unions, this group, which operates under the SPF Wider Group, enables more in-depth discussions with system leaders on policy with implications for the workforce, at an early stage in its development.

Workforce Issues Group (WIG)

A subgroup of the SPF Wider Group and SPF Strategic Group that supports the workforce through system change and assists initiatives to help NHS staff stay healthy and well and to work in positive workplace culture.

NHS Staff Council

The SPF links with the NHS Staff Council, which is a negotiating forum between employers and trade unions on the contractual arrangements for NHS staff.

Regional SPFs

There are eight regional SPFs which connect into the national SPF through NHS Employers National Engagement Service. These provide a forum for employers and trade unions to engage with regional and national leads to contribute to policy development and implementation where it impacts on the workforce in their region.

NHS trust, foundation trust and integrated care board SPFs

These organisation-based SPFs link to the SPF structure through the regional SPFs. Enabling managers and trade unions to work in partnership to deliver a positive working environment, in which staff can provide high quality care and services.

Workforce challenges in the current context

- ICB 50 per cent running cost reduction and reorganisation
- Challenging financial circumstances, job freezes and local cuts
- DHSC/NHSE merger and cuts at a regional level
- Rise in racism and racial harassment

National SPF key areas of activity:

- Engagement with Sir Jim Mackey, Chief Executive, NHS England
- Influenced national policy on wholly owned subsidiaries
- Statement from the SPF co-chairs condemning racist abuse and harassment

10 Year Health Plan & NHS Staff Standards

10 Year Health Plan (July 2025):

"A positive experience of work and the workplace should not be a 'nice to have'. We will work with the Social Partnership Forum to develop a **new set of staff standards**, which will for the first time outline minimum standards for modern employment.

We will introduce these standards in April 2026 and publish data on them at the employer level every quarter.

Progress so far:

- Staff Standards SPF workshop (24 September 2025)
- Work being led by an DHSC and NHS England project team
- The SPF will co-develop the Standards through a Task and Finish Group (TFG) chaired by Jon Restell, MIP and Rebecca Smith NHS Employers
- Membership of the TFG includes trade union and employer representatives
- Other partnership groups will pick up topic specific Standards work

Al and technology

- The 10 Year Health Plan (10YHP) states "all hospitals will be fully Alenabled within the lifetime of this Plan".
- Rising concerns around the impact of AI and technology on the workforce, particularly at lower bands.
- The national SPF is having a dedicated workshop as part of the work to develop the 10 Year Workforce Plan.
- We are seeking examples into how AI and technology has been managed well in relation to the impact on the workforce.



Thank you & request for feedback