

Wider Group key comms – 24 March 2026

Welcome and introductions

Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care, Karin Smyth, chaired the meeting. She welcomed Natham Holman, who is the new GMB representative on the group and Sonila Ellahi, who is the new British Dietician Association representative.

The Minister thanked members of the group for the time they had committed to SPF work since the last meeting. She acknowledged that the NHS Staff Survey results were disappointing and that they highlighted the importance of the 10 Year Workforce Plan and the NHS Staff Standards.

Partnership working case study

Sharon Lord, Northern Care Alliance; Ruth Barker, Tameside and Glossop; and James Bull, UNISON, presented on their initiative, which won the 2025 HPMA award for partnership working between employers and trade unions. See the case study on the [SPF website](#). Trade unions fed back that the initiative demonstrated the importance of co-production between employers and trade unions from the outset.

10 Year Workforce Plan (10YWP)

Danny Mortimer, DHSC, said the intention is to publish the 10YWP in May. It will align with the 10 Year Health Plan (10YHP) and aim to create a workforce where the right people, with the right skills, are in the right places to provide effective care.

Rather than continuing to increase staff numbers, which is unsustainable, it will focus on better employment, empowerment, training, equipping, educating and recruitment of staff.

There will be key assumptions that drive the need for staff productivity; more care in the community and less in acute settings, and more work preventing ill health. DHSC



has taken into consideration feedback, including that from the SPF, in the four 10YWP workshops held in February. This is assisting the development of the plan.

Trade unions highlighted the current situation, which is seeing staff numbers reduced. They noted the recently published COVID-19 report that detailed the lack of preparedness in the NHS for the pandemic, and this needed to be factored into thinking on future workforce numbers. Trade unions advised that there are safe staffing issues in midwifery and the lack of nurse to patient ratios. They also fed back that NHS workforce numbers are below international comparators, and how immigration changes from the Government are affecting internationally recruited staff.

DHSC will continue to engage with the SPF on the 10YWP prior to it being finalised.

NHS Staff Standards

Louisa Elias Evans, DHSC updated on the development of the standards, which has included close engagement since the end of last year with a dedicated group of SPF members, along with engagement with NHS frontline staff, senior leaders, think tanks, and experts.

The plan is to launch the Staff Standards in April. They will cover the following topic areas:

- Health and wellbeing
- Effective line management
- Promoting flexible working
- Preventing and reducing violence against staff
- Improving sexual safety
- Tackling racism

The standards will be mandatory and feed into the 2026/27 NHS Oversight Framework (NOF). A new compound score covering the delivery across the breadth of the standards will be implemented in the 2026/27 NOF. This will sit alongside the existing Staff Survey Engagement score.

DHSC and NHSE are now developing their comms for the launch. Following the launch, there will be a further phase of work to refine the standards and metrics.

It was acknowledged that, because of the deadline to complete the standards, driven by the NOF, they could not be co-produced in partnership, but that there had been very positive engagement with SPF on their development and full partnership working could be built into the next phase of work.



Standing updates

Violence Prevention and Reduction (VPR)

Rebecca Smith, NHS Employers and Alan Lofthouse, UNISON, updated on progress with the VPR work, which is being overseen by the SPF Violence Reduction Oversight Group. This includes the following, which will be launched in the spring:

- VPR comms materials
- Safe working practice guidance
- Data reporting guidance
- Post incident support guidance.

System Change Group

Jon Restell, MIP and Tom Simons, NHSE, updated on the System Change Group, which has been established to enable better partner engagement in the changing system architecture. The group first met in February, where it discussed its terms of reference and the model ICB and region.

The next Wider Group meeting will be held on 17 June 2026.

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

