

Minutes

Meeting: NHSScotland 'Once for Scotland' Workforce Policies Programme Board
Date: Monday 01 March 2021
Location: MS Teams

Attendees:

Present:

- (VB) Victoria Bowman, Deputy Director Health and Social Care Pay, Practice and Partnership **(Chair)**
- (JB) Janis Butler, HR Director, NHS Lothian
- (AG) Anna Gilbert, Head of Workforce Practice, Scottish Government
- (JJ) Jacqui Jones, HR Director, NHS National Services Scotland (NSS)
- (JO'C) James O'Connell, Regional Officer, Unite
- (NP) Norman Provan, Associate Director (Employment Relations), Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

In attendance:

- (SL) Steven Lindsay, Full Time Partnership Representative, NHS Grampian, Unite the Union
- (LH) Lynn Hunter, Programme Manager, NHS NSS
- (RVZ) Roxanne Van Zyl, Project Manager, NHS NSS

Apologies:

- (JA) Jeff Ace, Chief Executive, NHS Dumfries & Galloway
- (JAn) Jane Anderson, Unison
- (NC) Noreen Clancy, Head of Employee Relations, NHS Lothian
- (SLR) Steve Lea-Ross, Deputy Director for Workforce Planning & Development, Scottish Government

1. Welcome and Apologies

Victoria Bowman (VB) welcomed those present and acknowledged the apologies as above.

2. Actions from Meeting on 30 November 2020

Lynn Hunter (LH) advised the Board that Staffside and Scottish Government resource had been confirmed for target restart date (1 April 2021). However, employer capacity remained reduced in both employer representative and policy writer roles (Action 30/11/20 – 07). This would be discussed further under item 3 of this meeting.

There were no further outstanding actions for attention.

3. Review Current Position

The 'Once for Scotland' Workforce Policies Programme was paused at the end of March 2020, as efforts focused on the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Programme Board has reviewed the position at regular intervals. On 30 November 2020, the Board agreed to review again with a target restart date of 1 April 2021.

Members acknowledged the continued pressures in the system and provided a view on the capacity of each of the partners to release resource to undertake the work of the Policy Development Group.

Janis Butler (JB) and Jacqui Jones (JJ) noted that employers would be unable to release HR specialists to progress the work from April 2021. In addition, HR staff and other managers required a period of decompression and recovery prior to restarting national programmes of work.

James O'Connell (JO'C) and Norman Provan (NP) both expressed a view that the programme had been on pause for approaching a full year and that there was a need to restart and re-emphasise the importance of this partnership working approach and commitment to refresh the remaining workforce policies. It was noted that there will continue to be external pressures for some time and consideration should be given to how and when can we look to restart the programme.

Victoria Bowman (VB) acknowledged the need for decompression and a softer start to the programme. She also recognised the forthcoming pre-election period. Scottish Government will make available the necessary resource.

Discussion followed on the home working policy. The Board was in agreement that this policy required an immediate refresh and priority development as a 'Once for Scotland' workforce policy. It was suggested that the PDG restart in a limited capacity to focus on this single policy, with additional representation from other groups which have undertaken preparatory work in this area.

NP asked that going forward the Board commit to policy development in groupings, and not singular policy refresh, noting that this approach was key to the success of Phase 1.

The Board had previously agreed to complete mid-policy engagement events by electronic means. Engaging directly with individual delegates registered for the cancelled West of Scotland event, and follow up with delegates who attended the North and East engagement events. JB noted that the West of Scotland systems are most under pressure and consideration should be given to timing to ensure meaningful engagement.

The Board agreed for the PDG to form on a limited basis to undertake the refresh of the Home Working Policy and complete the mid-policy engagement event process. Formal restart of the programme, adopting the OFS approach of grouped policy development and with members of the PDG released at the same level as Phase 1, will commence 1 August 2021.

ACTION 01: Programme Team to pull together PDG to restart on a limited basis to undertake the refresh of the Home Working Policy and complete the mid-policy engagement event process.

ACTION 02: Programme Team to update Programme Plan to reflect agreed approach to refresh the Home Working Policy, complete mid-policy engagement and formally restart on 1 August 2021.

4. Update on Whistleblowing Policy

Anna Gilbert (AG) provided an overview of developments and progress made toward the revised implementation date of 1 April for the Whistleblowing Standards. The Programme Board noted the paper.

5. Update on Home Working

AG provided an overview of the work of the short-life working group of the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance Committee (SWAG) established to consider work undertaken in Boards to develop guidance on working from home during the pandemic. It was intended that this guidance would be utilised in the short term until the Home Working PIN Policy review and refresh is undertaken. However, since then Scottish Government have published guidance for employers in response to the stay at home regulations. The Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC) has also considered issues raised in relation to home working allowances and expenses, and a DL issued to offer further advice on terms and conditions of service that should be applied. In light of this, the SLWG concluded that no further guidance around working from home during the pandemic was required at this stage.

Referring to the earlier discussion on the need for an immediate refresh and development of a 'Once for Scotland' Home Working workforce policy, AG asked the Board for views on pulling together a group consisting of available PDG members and those involved in this work from a STAC and SWAG perspective to consider the policy and any T&C requirements in the round.

The Programme Board agreed that the PDG would be charged with drafting the policy and bring in additional members as necessary. It was noted that some PDG members also sit across STAC and SWAG.

ACTION 03: Programme Team to write out to Programme Board members to confirm membership / additional representation beyond PDG to draft the 'Once for Scotland' Home Working Policy

6. Phase 1 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)

Roxanne Van Zyl (RVZ) provided an overview of the EQIA process undertaken in Phase 1 and the need for further work to fully document the holistic consideration given to the development of 'core' workforce policies in Phase 1. The Board acknowledged the requirement to complete this work and approved the facilitated session approach outlined.

In relation to any further requirement for local EQIA, the Board was of the view that national policies should only require a national EQIA. However, the Board would be guided by legal advice.

ACTION 04: Programme Team to reconfirm any legal obligation on employers in respect of EQIAs for workforce policies.

7. Stakeholder Communication – Key Messages

The Board agreed the following key points for inclusion in the briefing to stakeholders:

- Home Working PIN Policy to be prioritised, and work to commence imminently
- Recognising several groups considering different aspects of Homeworking, this work will be taken forward by the Policy Development Group with representatives from a STAC and SWAG perspective to consider the policy and any terms & conditions in the round
- Work will also commence on the completion of the mid-policy engagement event process
- Formal restart of the programme, adopting the OFS approach of grouped policy development, from 1 August 2021
- Full commitment across the partnership for this programme of work

ACTION 05: LH to draft Stakeholder Communication detailing key decisions from the Programme Board meeting on 01/03/21 for members to review.

8. Any Other Business

No further items of business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Programme Board will be scheduled late June 2021.

ACTION 06: Programme Team to schedule a Programme Board for late June 2021