

SWAG Secretariat
Thursday 26 June 2025
15:00-16:00
MS Teams

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
Norman Provan (Chair)	Royal College of Nursing
Mary Morgan (co-Chair)	National Services Scotland
Steven Lindsay	Unite
Elaine Watson	NHS Tayside
Anna Gilbert	Scottish Government
Jane Hamilton	Scottish Government

Additional attendees:

Name	Organisation
Zachary Deponio	Scottish Government
Ronan O'Dowd	Scottish Government
Marita Buchanan	Scottish Government
Robert Hamilton	Scottish Government
Dr Lesley Crichton	Scottish Government
Victoria Freeland	Scottish Government
Kimberly Jordan	Scottish Government

Apologies from:

Name	Organisation
Fiona Hogg	Scottish Government

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Gordon MacKay	Unison
Jacqui Jones	NHS North Lanarkshire

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

- The Chair welcomed attendees and noted apologies. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment. Members agreed to the recording of the meeting for note-taking purposes.

Agenda Item 2 - NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Programme

- Dr Lesley Crichton, professional advisor to the Global Citizenship Programme, provided an overview of recent work and developments within the NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Programme. Members were reminded of the programme's purpose to create the conditions that enable NHS staff to participate in global health work to the mutual benefit of both staff and the health service.
- Established in 2018, the programme has grown to include around 500 staff across Scotland, with Global Citizenship Leads in 16 out of 22 Health Boards.
- Recent outputs include:
 - A refreshed Global Citizenship Framework, consolidating the programme's principles setting direction for future activity.
 - Launch of two eLearning modules hosted on Turas; one on the concept and relevance of Global Citizenship, and the other on ethical and effective engagement in global health work.
 - Development of a webinar series, with each session linked to one of the 10 principles in the new framework.
 - Updated HR guidance, aiming to simplify processes for staff wishing to use different types of leave to undertake global work.

Discussion

- EW welcomed the presentation and praised the inclusive approach. Noted strong support for the programme among HRDs and expressed appreciation for the effort to keep the issue visible at national level.
- The Chair asked whether there were particular gaps in participation by profession or demographic. As medical staff have a tendency to predominate in this kinds of initiatives, a query was raised as to how the programme might better reach and engage with non-medical roles.

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- LC acknowledged this was indeed a trend. While the programme strives to be inclusive, there are ongoing challenges in showing all staff groups that their contribution is valued and supported. LC welcomed suggestions on how to reach underrepresented groups.
- The Chair asked about visibility on local board websites and suggested increased use of national platforms, such as NHS Scotland awards, to promote awareness and recognition.
- LC reflected that board-level communications support had been variable. While some comms teams have supported promotion well, overall access to intranet space and nomination pathways remains inconsistent.

Actions	
A26062025(1)	Secretariat members agreed to consider ways they could actively promote Global Citizenship modules and webinars within their networks, encouraging boards to nominate champions or participants for national recognition, engaging with national award organisers and local communications leads to improve visibility, and exploring opportunities to embed Global Citizenship content within board-level training and development programmes.

Agenda Item 3 - Proposal to Establish a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Sub-Group Invite

- RH presented a proposal to establish a formal Health, Safety and Wellbeing Sub-Group under SWAG. The proposal builds on previous SWAG Committee discussions.
- The rationale for establishing a dedicated sub-group is based on:
 - Absence of a Scottish national group analogous to the UK Staff Council's Health and Safety Sub-Group.
 - Opportunities to support greater national consistency, share good practice and provide a platform for more structured input into national workforce discussions.
 - Supporting delivery against the Staff Governance Standard, particularly around safe working environments.
 - Bringing together issues across physical safety, mental wellbeing, and workplace culture.
- A draft Terms of Reference was included in the paper sent to members prior to the meeting, and members were invited to share their thoughts.

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- RH referenced previous discussions around the Essential Needs Paper and a short-life working group, as well as the UK NHS Staff Council Health, Safety and Wellbeing group. These discussions highlighted a gap in NHS Scotland structures.

Discussion

- SL supported the proposal but questioned why the sub-group would sit under SWAG rather than SPF, while acknowledging that both options had merit. Also noted the risk that the subgroup's scale could overwhelm SWAG unless clearly scoped.
- MM believed that because the group's primary purpose was to uphold the Staff Governance Standard, it logically sat under SWAG. Raised a distinction as to whether the group would be discussion focused or whether it would produce outcomes-focused work. Stressed that if the group did not offer additional insight or impact, it risked duplicating existing structures.
- MM also welcomed clarity on the group's scope, and emphasised that it should not become a vehicle for resolving individual staff grievances or disputes, particularly where local H&S frameworks were already well-established. It should instead offer national coordination and expert input on high-level matters.
- JH highlighted precedents for SWAG-affiliated groups concerning similar areas of interest, as well as co-opting experts. Supported that model being written explicitly into the ToR.
- The Chair reflected on the need to ensure a clear interface with the UK Staff Council, and suggested the ToR explicitly define how the Scottish group would engage with or influence UK-wide outputs and confirmed that Scotland's contribution must be meaningful, not reactive. Raised questions around how workplans would be generated, whether the group would propose its own agenda or act on commissions from SWAG.
- The Chair also argued for the group's membership to include SWAG Committee representatives, supplemented by subject matter experts without voting rights. Also supported developing a formal annual work programme.
- EW shared support and reiterated that the group should complement and not duplicate existing Board level structures at a local level, which would lead to an increase in bureaucracy.
- The Chair clarified that, based on Staff Council experience, the sub-group might want to consider reporting in through regular updates and not overwhelm the wider committee. Proposed that the Scottish Government

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confirm with SPF whether they would support SWAG housing the sub-group, noting the logic but also respecting potential views from SPF.

- MM asked whether there was sufficient co-membership between SWAG and SPF, and it was confirmed there was overlapping representation across groups.
- JH and The Chair agreed that the proposal should be presented to the SWAG Committee as a recommendation, not a decision already taken, to ensure proper scrutiny and avoid overreach. The Chair also concluded that there was no urgency but recommended taking time to revise the ToR and work up a proper proposal paper for SWAG approval.

Actions	
A26062025(2)	The draft ToR will be revised to: • Clarify the group's remit, purpose, and deliverables. • Include provisions for co-opted members and subject experts. • Define the relationship with SPF, APFs, and the UK Staff Council. • Specify reporting mechanisms and the approval process for the group's work plan. • Confirm that any recommendations from the group will be subject to SWAG Committee sign-off.
A26062025(3)	Revised proposal and ToR to be presented to the SWAG Committee in September 2025.
A26062025(4)	Secretariat to liaise with Bob Summers and Tobi Kunkel regarding representation at the UK Staff Council and how feedback loops to the Scottish subgroup might operate.
A26062025(5)	SG officials to explore whether SPF co-membership or formal reporting links would be helpful to clarify in the ToR.

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Agenda Item 4 - Once for Scotland (OfS) policies and Trade Union Complaints

- This item was raised to flag a potential gap of whether certain cases involving Trade Union officials employed by Health Boards should be addressed through Once for Scotland (OfS) workforce policies or via trade union's internal processes.
- JH explained the motivation was not to discuss a specific case, but to explore broader policy implications and consider whether clearer national guidance is required.
- SL noted that the challenge centred on defining whether the concern was about personal behaviour which would fall under the boards remit, or union representation which would fall under the Trade Union remit. Also queried the practicalities of making such distinctions.
- The Chair expressed discomfort with drawing policy conclusions from a single case, and emphasised that:
 - Boards must be able to process complaints involving their employees.
 - Staff representatives should be protected from inappropriate or retaliatory complaints.
 - Any process must be fair, impartial, and avoid inadvertently deterring robust representation.
- EW noted the importance of making the distinction between an individual's behaviour and their representative function. Suggested that where concerns arose about how representation was delivered (e.g. aggressive or inappropriate conduct), it could reasonably fall under board workforce policies. But if the concern related purely to what was said in the course of advocacy, it might sit more appropriately within TU governance. Supported the idea of doing short, focused work to develop principles that would provide clarity if similar situations arose in future.
- MM reflected on current understanding, where stewards or officials acting within their trade union capacity typically fell under the governance of their respective unions, and any issues should be raised through the union structure via a full-time official. However, also recognised that the boundaries could become blurred when individuals function as both a board employee and union representative. Also questioned whether the real issue was the need for a clear delineation of responsibility, and which organisation holds accountability for investigating and addressing issues depending on the circumstances. However, raised the risk of trying to pre-empt every theoretical scenario, emphasising that flexibility would be required.

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- The Chair asked whether the issue should ultimately be discussed by SPF rather than SWAG, given its potential implications for national partnership governance.
- JH agreed to explore these discussions further, including potential meetings with co-chairs and staff side colleagues. Indicated that SG officials would begin early scoping work and seek to develop an options paper that could be presented to SWAG Committee in the autumn if this was the route decided upon.

Actions	
A26062025(6)	Subject to agreement, SG Officials to prepare a paper for September SWAG Committee concerning the matters discussed under Item 4.
A26062025(7)	Committee to consider whether a broader SPF discussion is required depending on the complexity and reach of the issue.

Agenda Item 5: AOB

i. Staff Governance Template – EQIA Assurance

- MB sighted members on an updated version of the Staff Governance Monitoring Template which was presented to SWAG Committee in April. This template was approved subject to further comment and alterations being made. MB informed members that a new section asking Boards to provide assurance that Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) obligations are being appropriately fulfilled when implementing national Once for Scotland (OfS) workforce policies at the local level had also been added. MB sought approval for this section to be included.
- Members welcomed the update and agreed it was appropriate for this section to be included.
- The Chair suggested that, before publication, the revised SGM template be returned to the original drafting group for a final review.

Decision: SWAG Secretariat approved the inclusion of EQIA assurance section.

ii. Update on OfS Policies

- AG provided members with a brief update on the status of OfS Policies. Progress has been made towards publication. While no firm date can be given it is anticipated that this will take place before the end of Summer.

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iii. Future Item Proposal

- MM flagged the Service Renewal announcements and queried their impact on workforce experience, and proposed that this be scheduled as a future agenda item. JH confirmed SG is already exploring the implications and will bring an update to a future meeting.

Actions	
A26062025(8)	MB to return the revised Staff Governance Monitoring Template to the original drafting group for final review prior to publication and proceed with inclusion of the new EQIA assurance section in the final version of the Monitoring Template.
A26062025(9)	Secretariat to schedule a future agenda item on the NHS Service Renewal Framework, with focus on workforce implications.

Next Meeting: Tuesday 23 September 15:45 – 16:45

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