

Meeting minutes: NHSScotland 'Once for Scotland' Workforce Policies Programme Board

Date: Tuesday 22nd of October 2024 from 13:00 until 14:30

Location: MS Teams

Attendees:

- (AG) Anna Gilbert, Head of Workforce Practice, Scottish Government (Chair)
- (RB) Ryan Bradley, Project Support Officer, NHS National Services Scotland
- (ZD) Zac Deponio, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
- (MH) Magdalena Henderson, Project Manager, NHS National Services Scotland
- (CH) Catriona Hetherington, Programme Lead, Scottish Government
- (JJ) Jacqui Jones, HR Director, NHS Lanarkshire
- (SL) Steven Lindsay, Employee Director, NHS Grampian (PDG Vice-Chair)
- (GM) Gordon McKay, UNISON Health Committee
- (NP) Norman Provan, Associate Director (Employment Relations), Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

Apologies:

- (JB) Janis Butler, HR Director, NHS Lothian
- (JO'C) James O'Connell, Regional Officer, Unite

1. Welcome and apologies

AG welcomed members to the meeting and sought consent that the meeting could be recorded for the purpose of minute taking. Apologies sent in by JB and JO'C.

2. Minute from previous meeting

All present members agreed on the minutes from the Programme Board meeting of 30 August 2024.

3. Phase 2.2

Outstanding Queries

JJ brought forward the action from the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance Committee meeting of 1 October 2024 that the Programme Board were to consider whether it would be helpful to develop a case study based on the application of extant policy in a recent employment case.

DECISION 01: Programme Board decided not to develop a case study around workforce policy application at this time. This is on the basis of resource constraints and to protect the

advocated person centred approach. They agreed that this can be revisited at a future date if deemed necessary at that time.

ACTION 01: CH to provide an update to SWAG member Pamela Jamieson that the programme board considered whether developing a case study around workforce policy application would be helpful and in consideration of resource constraints and the advocated person-centred approach, it was agreed not to progress this at the current time.

NP advised that it may be helpful for an experienced HRD to reach out to offer support in this area.

Soft Launch

AG explained that the soft launch started on 15th of October 2024 and will run until 15th of January 2025. During soft launch, it is expected that all HR departments will prepare for 'go live' and offer feedback on the policies and supporting documents. AG noted that would be considered by the Policy Development Group and reported to the Programme Board before the launch date that is currently set for February 2025.

Approval by the Health Secretary

AG stated that the Cabinet Secretary for Health is aware and content with the policies and progress. Formal approval for the policies will be sought following 'Soft launch' in February to enable 'go live'.

Attendance Policy Stage 3

Raised by GM, the issue of moving a disciplinary to stage 3, bypassing stage 1 and 2 should only be permitted in 2 occasions. 1 – where the member of staff has been absent for 12 months or more. 2 – Mutual agreement, where the member of staff and HR agree to go straight to stage 3. There are no other reasons why it should go straight to stage 3. Programme Board Agreed. SL raised an exception for terminal illness.

DECISION 02: It was decided that the only 2 reasons for going straight to stage 3 of disciplinary for attendance were.

1. the employee has been absent for 12 months or more. 2. Mutual agreement between both parties. Employee and HR/Manager

ACTION 02: PDG to re-consider the wording in the Attendance policy in relation to the 'going straight to stage 3'. Wording will be agreed with programme board members before the policy amendment is made.

4. Programme Highlight Report

MH talked through the Highlight report. She stated that the overall RAG status for Phase 2.2 is currently green.

Phase 3 is currently amber due to PDG membership shortage, not being able to recruit after some members that are leaving (including the chair that has left) as well as the project team's SLA not being extended past March 2025.

MH listed the tasks that are currently being actioned – EQIAs are being drafted, test site for policies has been tested by user groups and planning for phase 3. The mailbox is being monitored for feedback from the soft launch.

SL referred to the potential engagement events for the next phase- Managing Health at Work Policies. He noted the value of these sessions in employee awareness, knowledge and contributions in the earlier phases of the programme but recognised the specialist nature of the MHAW policies and the resource challenges. He proposed that engagement with stakeholders should take a different approach for these policies.

CH acknowledged that whilst there had been a minuted agreement at a previous SWAG meeting to revisit engagement sessions for these policies, the current climate and specialist nature of the MHAW policies necessitated direct engagement with identified subject matter experts at the early stages of policy development to build on information gathered at the previous events.

DECISION 03: The programme Board supported the proposal to engage directly with subject matter experts during the early stages of policy refresh rather than engagement events given the anticipated SME involvement and resource challenges.

5. Delivering Phase 3 and BAU - Proposal

AG presented the options paper and stated that the SLA for the project team (**MH** and **RB**) ends at the end of March 2025. Therefore, to make the most of the resource, it makes sense to start phase 3 as soon as possible. The structure of the PDG and Programme Board will remain unchanged. **AG** asked the board if anyone had any views on how else this can be done.

CH confirmed that whilst the current project resource will only be in place until 31 March 2025, she was content that the project can be delivered within the timescales. She noted the delivery timescale impact on the funding for NES Digital work to upload and develop the NHSScotland Workforce Policies webpage. This will run until the end of March 2026, after that, the funding is expected to reflect a maintenance role.

GM enquired if there is any timescale for reviewing current OfS policies. **AG** stated that there is currently no agreed review period scheduled. If there are any issues with policies, they will have to go back to SWAG for consideration. **AG** also noted that there is not enough capacity to review extant NHSScotland Workforce Policies at this time, but that this would need to be considered going forward.

AG stated that Janis Butler had previously raised the issue of reviewing local policies in the Once for Scotland format. It was advised that this was not within the scope of the current Programme but may be considered at a later date. **AG** thanked everyone for their feedback.

DECISION 04: An online engagement event was discussed by the board. The decision was made not to hold an engagement event for Phase 3 of the programme due to lack of resource and time.

DECISION 05: The board agreed to the proposal for Phase 3 – [Proposal](#).

6. Risk and Issues

There are 2 new risks.

- P2-24: "Programme Delivery - Phase 3
There is a risk that the ongoing Scottish Government funding review does not provide sufficient funding to cover costs of the Project support Team for remainder of the financial year.

- P2-25: Timeline: There is a risk that Phase 3 will not be delivered on time.

Delay to delivering phase 3, with the project team leaving in March 2025 this may delay the project finishing by March 2026

7. Membership

JJ stated that she has spoken to 4 people regarding replacing Noreen Clancy, Chair of PDG. **JJ** stated that the issue might be around committing 1 day per week and the workload.

JJ also raised that the person to replace Noreen Clancy needs to be policy focused and have some experience in working in partnership with unions and professional bodies.

AG asked **JJ** if she would be happy for Scottish Government to send a letter out to Health Board HRDs enquiring if they have any people that would be interested in the role. **JJ** and others from the Programme Board agreed with this approach.

ACTION 03: A letter to be developed and sent out to HB HRDs asking if they have any candidates that would be interested in Chairing and/or joining the PDG.

NP suggested that Trade Union representatives may know HR reps that would be interested in additional partnership working. He also suggested that the letter should state benefits in experience opportunity for career progression.

NP also advised that he could reach out to Trade Union representatives who had worked with employers who they feel would be suitable to join the PDG as employer representatives.

ACTION 04: Norman Provan to reach out to Trade Union representatives for suggestions on employee representatives on the PDG.

8. Any Other Business

AG stated that NES Digital group raised that there is a lack of awareness of the OfS website. Most Health Boards internal HR sites/SharePoint link directly to the policy pages, but not to the website overall.

JJ suggested that when the next communication go out to Health Boards, we ask them to promote the website. **NP** is happy to promote the website on social media and newsletters.

AG advised of putting the URL on the bottom of the next SWAY newsletter.

DECISION 06: The board agreed that having the URL at the bottom of future SWAY Newsletters to raise awareness of the overall OfS Workforce Policy website.

CH noted that NES Digital have offered user testing feedback about repeated links in the extant Attendance Policy. This has been considered at PDG who suggest to the Programme Board that there is no change, as the links are repeated for ease of use. The link is at multiple points, so it is there for the user to click on when they are that part of the policy.

GM raised adding the word 'miscarriage' into the extant Special Leave Policy. **CH** agreed to check the status of this action.

Next Programme Board Meeting:

Tuesday 26 November - Meeting was cancelled.

Monday 16 December 2024 - Meeting cancelled.

Friday 31 January 2025 from 09:30am until 11:30am via MS Teams