

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

Date: Tuesday 27th May 2025 14:00-16:00

Location: MS Teams

Attendees:

- (CH) Catriona Hetherington, Programme Lead, Scottish Government (Stepped in as Chair)
- (AB) Audrey Bevan, HR Manager, NHS Lanarkshire
- (SL) Steven Lindsay, Employee Director, NHS Grampian (PDG Vice-Chair)
- (GM) Gordon McKay, UNISON Health Committee
- (JO'B) Jarrard O'Brien, Director of People and Culture, NHS Orkney- left the meeting at 14:30 due to other urgent business.
- (JO'C) James O'Connell, Regional Officer, Unite
- (ZD) Zac Deponio, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
- (JJ) Jacqui Jones, HR Director, NHS Lanarkshire

Apologies

- (AG) Anna Gilbert, Head of Workforce Practice, Scottish Government (Chair)
- (NP) Norman Provan, Associate Director (Employment Relations), Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

1. Welcome and apologies

CH welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies from Anna Gilbert.

2. Minutes from meeting previous meetings for approval and review priority actions

Last meeting abandoned due to not being at quorate. The minutes of the previous meetings were agreed as an accurate record from both meetings.

CH updated on the outstanding actions from previous meetings:

Action 12 – Re the Programme Board vacancy:. JJ is progressing this action. Jarrard O'Brien advised that he will be leaving in September.

Action 3- Re linking the extant Interim Adverse weather policy (DL) to the published Special Leave Policy: Proposed changes will be circulated to members for approval.

Action 6 – Re business as usual proposal after the programme concludes in April 2026: CH will bring this to a future meeting.

Action 7 – Re employer representative vacancies on the Policy Development Group: JO'B agreed to take this forward.

Action 3 – Re Phase 2.2 update: A letter was issued to Boards on 25 March 2025 and a further letter was issued to Boards on the 8th of May. The assurance work referred to in the letters is ongoing. Any issues raised through this process will be considered in view of any required changes which will be discussed with constituent representatives of the Programme. JJ and SL agreed to work with CH to facilitate any changes.

Action 5 and 7 are covered below.

Terms of Reference

CH referred to the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) that has been shared in advance of the meeting highlighting addition of the agreed escalation process. Members confirmed they were content with the updates.

Action: Close Action 01 (25/03/25)

3. Programme Highlight Report

CH: Summarised the Highlight Report advising that the Policy Development Group are making good progress in line with the project time scales. Progress on consultation analysis is indicated on the chart in the highlight report.

4. Risk and Issues

CH referred to the Risk and Issue Register that was circulated to the group in advance of the meeting and highlighted:

- P2-15: Covered in Action 12. Likelihood raised to 5
- P2-18: No further update
- P2-19: Budget for 2025/2026 approved. Likelihood score reduced to 2
- P2-22: No further update remains at score 16 as no replacement for previous experienced Employer rep who served as PDG Chair
- P2-24: This risk has been realised and will be moved to issue log. No programme support will be provided. Scottish Government PDG members are project managing the programme along with other work commitments.
- P2-25: Note that a 2-month pre-election period commences 7/04/2026. New requirement for further level of assurance sought by ministers, may also impact on timescales.
- P2-26: The SRO retires in October 2025. Likelihood increased to 3.

Action: P2-24: ZD to move this risk to issue log

5. Phase 3 (Interim Consultation Analysis update)

ZD provided an update, he highlighted the following:

- The consultation received 49 responses.
- 31 of those were through organisations and 18 individual.
- This is 5 less than the consultation responses for the consultation of the policies in Phase 2.2.
- The PDG hope to be in a position to complete this work in the next few weeks.
- The PDG may seek further clarity from individual subject matter experts. The analysis to date does not indicate that any major changes will be required. Note that SMEs were involved in early drafting of these policies pre- consultation. ZD noted

that some respondents used this consultation as an opportunity to share opinions and personal experiences.

- Work related stress received most amount of comments which is high on the agenda for H&S leads. With the main comment being around compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act, asking if it could link to further useful supporting tools. There was also feedback that the policy should focus on the preventive strategies, instead of it being so heavily focussed on the reactive support. The policy aim is about managing stress and creating a supportive environment and the IWWC (Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures Framework) has a more preventative focus. Further detail on manager responsibilities, supporting staff, and identifying stressors, to mitigate where possible, will be provided in the guides.
- There were a lot of the comments that there is no testing provision included in the Alcohol and other substances policy. Programme Board member views were sought on this point.

GM raised concerns about random drug testing given that staff could be disciplined for not agreeing to this. He confirmed that he would be opposed to any compulsory testing.

JO'C highlighted the complexities of introducing a random testing process and confirmed that he would not support this approach.

CH offered clarification that what was being described was testing where a problem had been identified and a support plan agreed.

JJ suggested that the terminology of random drug testing is leading to a misunderstanding. She confirmed that testing staff should only happen where it is absolutely necessary.

SL noted that the consultation is anonymous and all are individual views.

GM re-iterated that there should not be testing in NHS without consent.

JJ confirmed that this needs to be agreed nationally.

Decision: The Programme Board do not support the inclusion of drug testing in the policy.

6. Neonatal Care Leave and Pay

CH referred to the draft guide that has already been circulated to members.

JO'C highlighted the need to ensure that the legal requirements are covered and managers know what their legal responsibilities are.

JJ commented that the guidance covers it well and invited comment from AB as an expert in this area.

CH confirmed that AB has contributed to creating the guide and thanked her for her input.

AB commented that the guide lays out the terms and conditions in a simple format for all to understand.

GM advised that he was content with the paper but asked for clarification over the wording about a child having to be in neonatal care for seven consecutive days before qualifying, asking whether part of a day counts as a whole day or means 24 hours.

CH indicated that a person centred approach would be appropriate.

JO'C raised concerns about practice highlighting the need to be mindful of interpretation of different individuals.

Action: PDG to consider the guide wording to offer clarity around a child having to be in neonatal care for seven consecutive days before qualifying. The guide can then be progressed for publication and linked with related policies.

7. Any Other Business

JO'C flagged an issue to the group for awareness. This concerns a recent incident where an ex- employee waited 3.5 years for an answer to their question. The answer was provided

after they had left the board and outwith the 28 days set out in the Grievance Policy. The individual has been advised that this is now a table top exercise. However, if they had had the answer sooner it could have raised this as a grievance. JO'C will deal with it offline but wanted to raise this issue for awareness.

CH advised that the date of the next Programme Board Meeting will be confirmed shortly.