

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

**Date:** Tuesday 1 July 2025 14:00-16:00

**Location:** MS Teams

**Attendees:**

- (AG) Anna Gilbert, OFS SRO, Scottish Government (Chair)
- (CH) Catriona Hetherington, OFS Programme Lead, Scottish Government
- (ZD) Zac Deponio, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
- (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)
- (JO) Jarrard O'Brien, Director of People and Culture, NHS Orkney

**Apologies:**

- (JJ) Jacqui Jones, HR Director, NHS Lanarkshire
- (JO'C) James O'Connell, Regional Officer, Unite

**1. Welcome and apologies**

AG welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies.

AG also apologised for the delay in issuing the papers ahead of the meeting.

**2. Minutes and actions from previous meeting 27 May 2025 and meeting note from 24 April 2025**

Attendees confirmed that they were content with the minutes from the meeting on 27 May 2025 and the note from the abandoned meeting on 24 April 2025. These had been updated following circulation to members ahead of the meeting.

Regarding the publication of phase 2.2 NHSScotland Workforce Policies, AG provided an update that the assurance exercise is complete. The Health Secretary is content for the draft policies and supporting documents excluding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and the Gender Transitioning guide, to proceed to publication.

AG confirmed that Boards would be informed of the formal publication date once it was scheduled.

Action 3 (25/03/25): AG advised that any documents with suggested changes will be shared with the Programme Board (PB) prior to sharing with the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance Committee (SWAG) before publishing. Members indicated that they were content with this position.

Action 12 (25/04/24) and Action 7(31/01/2025):JO to chase update on the replacement of an employee representative for the Programme Board in addition to a HRD Rep. JO advised that HRD's meeting is next week and will pick it up then.

Action 3 (31/01/25): AG confirmed this action is closed. There was agreed wording added to the Special Leave policy to link it to the interim Adverse Weather DL. This has now been progressed. CH advised that Digital colleagues will make the change on the website in the coming week(s).

Action 6 (31/01/25): AG advised that a 'Business as Usual' proposal will be brought to the next meeting on 29 July.

Action 6 (25/03/25): CH advised that, after discussion with policy development group members on the neonatal care and leave guide, clarification has been added regarding the calculation of the qualifying period and what counts as day one. The final version will be shared with PB members.

Once wording has been agreed with members, it will be progressed through SWAG for sign off.

### **3. Programme Highlight Report**

CH summarised key points on the programme highlight report.

The policy development group (PDG) are currently reviewing draft policies and supporting guides, in view of the comments from the consultation. The Phase 3 plan is currently on track, to achieve the scheduled finalising of policies and supporting documents for PB review by the end of September 2025. CH noted that the Scottish Government internal assurance process will need to be factored into this timeline. This will be scheduled for late Summer/early Autumn when the policies are finalised prior to PB and SWAG sign off.

CH and SL attended the Heads of Health and Safety Committee meeting to provide an update on Phase 3 progress. The meeting proved beneficial and useful by linking in with key subject matter experts within the Managing Health at Work suite of policies. CH confirmed that she advised the Committee that the programme of work would not include developing a standalone 'health and safety policy'. The Committee were content with this position.

#### 4. Risks & Issues: Review current risks & issues

AG discussed current risks and issues.

P2-15: No change.

P2-18: No further update on reform issue. Further updates will be provided when we have them.

P2-22: Remains at a score of 16 due to no replacement as yet for the previous experienced Employer Rep on the PDG.

P2-24 Moved to issue as this risk has become an issue. AG noted that CH and ZD are currently project managing the programme providing the programme support alongside other work commitments.

P2-25: Additional impact added - two-month pre-election period commences on the 7 April 2026 and new requirement to include additional assurances in our processes with a possible impact of risk.

P2-26: Likelihood increased from two to three as a result of no decision regarding filling vacancy.

NP commented that there is a risk that the additional internal assurance processes may impact on timelines. AG gave assurance that CH has discussed the project schedule with Scottish Government colleagues who have indicated they will be able to meet these milestones.

#### 5. Phase 3 key themes and changes for review following consultation analysis

CH provided an update on key themes and changes and highlighted key points.

##### **Adverse Weather Policy**

The Policy was shaped around the existing interim national DL for Adverse Weather. The policy and manager's guide have been drafted and reviewed following feedback from the consultation. The normal programme process is to develop the employee guide once the manager guide has been approved by the Programme Board.

- Comments from consultation show a desire for clarity around safety and well-being of employees.
- Pre-planning of adverse weather conditions ensuring they are highlighted in the managers guide allowing managers to put plans in place as best as possible.
- Ensuring the policy advocates a risk assessment-based approach.

## Menopause and Menstrual Health Policy

A lot of comments were on information that will be included in the supporting documents.

- Comments consisted of requests to include examples of symptoms and adjustments. In line with OfS style, this level of information will be included in the guides.
- Considerations are being given to include wording that provides opportunity for employees to speak to someone other than their manager (perhaps a different gender) given that some employees may find discussions surrounding menopause and menstrual health symptoms uncomfortable.

NP asked if it was the intention that the alternative manager would then act as the line manager, making decisions, or are they a liaison to the existing manager?

CH acknowledged the question and agreed to discuss with the PDG.

GM questioned whether this was intended to be only about gender or about other preferences regarding an appropriate person to speak to and whether it would be the manager who could decide who the alternative manager should be.

SL advised that whilst the PDG intention was that the wording offered a flexible person centred approach, he was content for this to be discussed further to the PDG to develop clarifying wording.

JO commented that it would be up to the member of staff to make sure that they're comfortable speaking to someone, but it's important that it's not specifically gendered here because the individual may feel uncomfortable simply because they don't have a personal relationship with the line manager that allows them to talk about the sort of topic.

**Action:** PDG to consider these points and how to offer further clarity around alternative manager responsibilities and identifying an alternative manager and will bring back to the next PB.

## Alcohol and Other Substance Policy

- Policy is developed from existing PIN policy. Challenges around random drug testing discussed.
- CH confirmed similar approach and wording from PIN regarding testing will be adopted. The group were content with this approach.

### **Smoking and Vaping Policy**

- CH awaiting clarity around legislative implications around about smoking and vaping.
- Confusion around definition of smoking, therefore, additional clarity will be added.
- GM raised concerns around lack of clarity regarding the wording of not smoking whilst in uniform or when they can be identified as an NHS employee.
- SL confirmed that the policy intention was not to refer to employee's action in their own time, only in work time and identified as such wearing a uniform or a badge or lanyard.
- GM asked that more specific wording was considered to ensure that this was not interpreted to refer to a situation where an individual is simply known to work for the NHS.
- NP offered wording '*not permitted to smoke when in uniform or where they can be identified as being on duty as an NHS employee*'. The group were content with the approach.

**Action:** PDG to update the policy with suggested wording: '*not permitted to smoke when in uniform or where they can be identified as being on duty as an NHS employee*'.

### **Work-Related Violence and Aggression Policy**

- Comments about the policy scope, specifically relating to the inclusion of trainees and volunteers who might be at risk. Reason for this is that anybody who's providing a service for the NHSScotland should be protected.
- Policy amended to highlight that the policy applies to all employees. It also applies to bank agency, special workers, volunteers, contractors and those on placements such as trainee students or individuals undertaking work experience.
- Feedback given that the policy wasn't clear enough in terms reporting any incident to the police. We want to be very clear that employees should be aware that it is their responsibility to make the report to the police as a criminal situation. Therefore, a bullet point is being added to reflect this. Concerns were raised around emphasising the importance of this and how

it can be done. CH indicated this will be covered in the supporting documents but will consider the feedback.

- JO Asked if the guide would include guidance on how the employee should report an incident.
- CH Confirmed that further information will be included in the guides as well as signposting.
- GM Questioned whether the intention was that the manager rather than the employee who should report the incident.
- CH Clarified that intention of the wording was that the manager is responsible to make sure that the employee knows that if they want to report it and they should be encouraged to report it, it's their responsibility.
- GM Questioned the wording about the organisation supporting the employee where appropriate.
- CH Clarified that this refers to involving the police if appropriate.
- GM commented that the part about reporting didn't say 'if appropriate' yet the part about supporting the employee did include 'if appropriate'.
- AG Commented that she understood GM's concern- an employee is being encouraged to report an incident but being advised that if they do report it, there's only under certain circumstances that the employer will support them.
- CH Confirmed they would review the wording on the basis of these comments.
- NP pointed out the difference between the Criminal Injuries Compensation Awards Scheme and a Personal Injury and the importance of managers encouraging staff to report any violence against them in order to qualify for compensation. He offered to support the PDG in providing appropriate wording.
- In response to a request to include an overarching statement on the NHS' position on violence and aggression, a statement has been added. Members were asked if they were content with the reference to 'zero-tolerance'. Members confirmed they were content.

**Action:** NP to offer policy wording re reporting incidents and compensation implications

### **Work-Related Stress Policy**

- Added reference to Organisational Development and links to HSE guidance within the policy.

- Comments to include a 'Monitoring and Review' section, which was agreed. The policy development group have shaped the section with considerations given to organisational stress audit.
- CH confirmed ongoing engagement with SMEs around what is meant by the term 'problem-solving environment'.

### **Work-Related Driving Policy**

- Consultation comments around insurance and vehicle safety. Amendments made to the employee responsibilities to make sure that their insurance covers business use if using their personal vehicles for work-related activities.
- We're also linking to the adverse weather policy within the 'related policies' section to make sure that the two are read together where needed.
- Signpost links to the Highway Code added.
- Employee responsibilities section will have wording to clarify any changes to their driving licence should be reported to their employer.

### **Manual Handling Policy**

- This policy is still to be reviewed in light of any changes or considerations from the consultation.
- As expected, the comments were quite technical. These will be balanced for inclusion alongside the OfS readability requirements and subject matter expert engagement if necessary.
- Comments included requests around when to report near misses, including a monitoring and review section, including links to key legislation, more information on risk assessments and further supportive mechanisms.

### **Lone working Policy**

- CH advised that the policy development group were still reviewing the consultation comments, and no specific points were raised for the Programme Board.
- CH highlighted a key focus was to ensure it was clear within the policy that risks are assessed and that there are control measures in place within the 'Monitoring and Review' section.

### **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)**

- CH advised that the policy development group were still reviewing the consultation comments, and no specific points were raised for the Programme Board.
- CH advised that as suspected, the comments have been technical and that the policy development group will engage with subject matter experts before bringing the policy and associated guides to Programme Board for approval.

## **6. AOB**

In light of impending actions to enable publication of Phase 2.2 NHSScotland Workforce policies, AG indicated the need for reactive offline Programme Board and SWAG Committee engagement.

The next Programme Board meeting will be held on 29 July 15:00-17:00.

END