

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

Date: Tuesday 29 July 2025 15:00-16:30

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)
- (NP) Norman Provan, Associate Director (Employment Relations), Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
- (JO) Jarrard O'Brien, Director of People and Culture, NHS Orkney
- (JJ) Jacqui Jones, HR Director, NHS Lanarkshire

Apologies:

- (JO'C) James O'Connell, Regional Officer, Unite
- (GM) Gordon McKay, UNISON Health Committee

1. Welcome and apologies

AG welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. Minutes and actions from previous meeting 1 July 2025

Attendees confirmed that they were content with the minutes from the meeting 1 July 2025

Update on actions.

Action 12 (25/04/24) re sourcing an Employer rep for the Programme Board and Action 07 (31/01/2025 re PDG employer rep: JJ advised she would check whether an email requesting this resource had been issued to HRDs on 1st August. JJ highlighted that obtaining a volunteer had been problematic particularly for PDG but she would continue to raise. JJ clarified the ask for the PDG member and whether it was one or two days per week. CH confirmed that her understanding was that it was one day per week and that this was a challenge given that one day may be entirely taken up by the PDG meeting. CH highlighted the stage that the phase 3 work is at and suggested that on this basis, an additional PDG member may no longer be of such

benefit as the current members having protected time for the PDG role. NP suggested that rather than an individual committing one day a week on the PDG, there may be more likely to secure a volunteer to offer resource through reviewing PDG outputs virtually in their own time. JJ confirmed she would pick that up with HRDs.

Action 06 (31/01/2025) re BAU proposal: AG confirmed that she would bring this to a further meeting. AG also highlighted that the extant NHSScotland Workforce Policies do not currently include review dates and noted that the Core policies were published in 2020. This will also be addressed in the BAU paper.

Action 3 (25/03/25) re Phase 2.2 policies publication: AG confirmed that the Scottish Government (SG) wrote to Boards on the 8th & 12th of May to provide an explanation for the delay in policies being published due to the additional internal assurance process in light of the Supreme Court ruling and the EHRC's revision of their code of practice. AG confirmed that the internal assurance process has since been completed and the policies and supporting documents were sent to both the Programme Board and SWAG for comments. AG advised that we were intending to publish on week commencing 4 August. CH added that we would advise Boards by letter of the publication date in advance. She asked members for a steer on how much advance notice the required ahead of publication and whether 1 week would be sufficient noting that this would enable publication on week commencing 4 August. JJ referred to the 'Soft launch' period and said that in view of that she felt one week notice was sufficient. SL noted that this is peak annual leave season but acknowledged that Boards have indicated that they would like these policies to be published and on that basis one week is fine. JO'B and AG expressed their agreement.

Action 4 (25/03/25) and Action 5 (25/03/25) has been moved to the risk register as there is a risk that lack of support will likely impact delivery of key milestones and potential delay.

Action 6 (31/01/25): Regarding Neonatal Care guide CH reminded the group that a draft paper was presented, but there was clarification requested on when the 7 days absence would start. Clarification was received via the PDG. However, the Central Legal Office (CLO) have reviewed the document and provided comments and changes to be considered. Engagement with CLO is still ongoing. Following this, the guide will be shared after completion of SG internal assurance process.

Action 1 (01/07/25), Action 2 (01/07/25) and Action 3 (01/07/25): Discussed at item 5.

3. Programme Highlight Report

CH summarised key points on the programme highlight report which had been shared with members ahead of the meeting.

Phase 2.2

CH noted correspondence from GM, who was concerned around the change of wording whether there are implications for other policies. CH confirmed she will liaise with GM separately to explain that the intention of this was for readability of that particular section of the policy and that this would not affect other policies.

Equality Impact Assessments for each policy and a 'You Said, We Did' consultation response document have been created. These documents will be published after the formal publication of phase 2.2 policies and guides.

Phase 3

The PDG have now reviewed all policies except the Manual Handling policy.

The accompanying employee guides will reflect what's already in the managers guide, which are currently in first draft stage. Timing for these documents to be completed are on track however, milestones were amended slightly due to the added internal assurance process and CLO approval, but the group are hopeful that this will be a light touch exercise given the technical nature of the policies. These milestones have been clearly marked in the highlight report.

Documents should be in final draft form for review by the Programme Board at the August 28th meeting. The documents will then be progressed to SWAG in September for sign off before the soft-launch period that is scheduled to commence by the end of this year.

No further comments raised from the group.

4. Risks & Issues: Review current risks & issues

AG discussed current risks and issues.

P2-18 Wider reform agenda: No further update, to be brought to the next meeting.

P2-22 Technical capability PDG chair: No further update, as this risk has been realised it has now been moved to the Issue Log.

P2-25 Timeline: Discussed earlier, it has been noted that the added internal assurance process that is in addition to the established engagement with CLO could result in a delay to programme delivery.

P2-26 Anna's retirement: AG confirmed Christina Stokes will take over as SRO following internal merger. CH confirmed that handover work is underway and it is expected that Christina will shadow the Programme Board meetings between now and AG's retirement.

No further comments raised from the group.

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

CH referred to the key themes and changes that were covered at the previous meeting on 1st July: Adverse Weather, Menopause and Menstrual Health, Alcohol and other Substances, Smoking and Vaping, Work-Related Violence and Aggression and Work-Related Stress.

As covered in the paper, there were changes requested at the last meeting for the Menopause policy and the Smoking Policy.

Menopause and Menstrual Health

Wording has been revised on the policy on when an employee would seek support from an alternative manager if they felt uncomfortable speaking with their substantive manager. Members had requested clarity that this would be the employee's decision and also clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the alternative manager.

Within the 'Supportive conversation' section wording has been changed to "if an employee feels uncomfortable speaking to their manager, they may choose to speak to another manager"

and

"...in this situation, the other manager should provide a safe, confidential space for the employee to discuss their concerns. They should liaise with the direct manager and HR to facilitate any reasonable adjustments or support."

Smoking and Vaping policy

Members had highlighted concerns of the draft policy wording referring to employees not being permitted to smoke when they can be identified as an NHS employee, citing that the intention was surely that this was only when they were on duty. Wording has therefore been amended as follows:

"Employees are not permitted to smoke when in uniform or where they can be identified as an on-duty employee of the NHS."

CH also highlighted that since the paper was issued, the COSHH policy has been reviewed. CH advised that there were no major changes to the policy and that the PDG have consulted SME's with any questions following

consultation analysis. An updated version of the paper has been shared with the group to highlight the key changes.

6. AOB

The next Programme Board meeting will be held on 28 August 14:00-16:00.

SL wanted to acknowledge the great amount of work ZD and CH have been undertaking to keep this programme on track and this should not be underestimated. AG commented that this was a monumental amount of work and thanked CH and ZD. JJ acknowledged SL comment and indicated her agreement and thanks for all the unseen work being done in the background since losing Programme support. SL noted that this work has been key to ensuring the programme has kept on track.

END