

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

Date: Thursday 16 October 2025 14:00-15:30

Location: MS Teams

Attendees:

(CH) Catriona Hetherington, OFS Programme Lead, Scottish Government (Chair)
(ZD) Zac Deponio, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
(NP) Norman Provan, Associate Director (Employment Relations), Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
(CS) Christina Stokes, Head of Equality, Experience and Partnership Unit, Scottish Government
(GM) Gordon McKay, UNISON Health Committee
(MB) Martin Bryce Digital Content Lead, NES
(KR) Kevin Reith, HR Director, NHS Forth Valley

Apologies:

(JJ) Jacqui Jones, HR Director, NHS Lanarkshire
(JO'C) James O'Connell, Regional Officer, Unite
(SL) Steven Lindsay, Employee Director, NHS Grampian (PDG Vice-Chair)

1. Welcome and apologies.

CH welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. Minutes and actions from previous meeting 2 September 2025

Attendees confirmed that they were content with the minutes from the meeting 2 September 2025.

Update on actions:

Action 12 (25/04/24) & In terms of the PB membership, KR has joined PB to replace Jarrad.

Action 7 (31/01/25): The policy development group is scheduled to conclude in April 2026 it was agreed at the last minute that the outstanding vacancy would remain unfilled.

Action 06 (31/01/25): Business as Usual paper, discussed at item 6.

Action 06 (25/03/25): Neonatal Care Leave and Pay guide: CH updated that this is at a final draft stage. Questions from the Additional Assurance Process are being considered by the PDG. The final agreed version will be shared with the PB and SWAG. CH is hopeful this will be finalised ahead of the next Programme Board meeting.

3. Programme Highlight Report

ZD gave an update on the Programme Highlight Report.

Phase 2.2 status remains unchanged.

Phase 3: The Phase 3 policies and supporting documents were presented to SWAG members for approval at the meeting on 7 October. Members were advised that three supporting documents had not been made available through the test-site. These included: Work-related Stress individual risk-assessment, Alcohol and other Substances supportive plan and the combined risk assessment for lone working, work-related driving and work-related violence and aggression. ZD confirmed that these have been shared with members for comments by COB 16 October.

Next steps: The soft launch will commence on 3 November 2025. Whilst this date has already been shared on a provisional basis with Board HRD's, Deputy HRD's and ED's, this followed requests from Boards for advance notice to enable time to prepare.

4. Risks & Issues: Review current risks & issues

CH discussed current risks and issues.

P2-25 Timeline: 07/10/2025: As advised by ZD in item 3, SWAG approved all documents except for 3 supporting documents that have been shared on 09/10/2025. Programme is on track to commence the 3 month 'soft launch' on 3 Nov with a view to 'go live' at the end of March. However, these timelines may be impacted by feedback from the 'soft launch'. CH confirmed that the programme are working towards Ministerial sign off in early March due to pre-election period implications.

Issue 1004: Annual Leave Calculator: CH advised there is still an ongoing dialogue with T&C colleagues regarding the approach to long shift working.

No further comments raised from the group.

5. Digital Development and Analytics update

MB from the Digital Development Group presented a slide deck on the programme's digital journey and website user analytics. Slides will be shared with members.

NP mentioned that this vindicates the decision made to have an exclusively digital production rather than paper copies of policies and wiped any concerns of version control.

Concerns were also raised around mobile access to the website rather than a desktop and referred back to when the process started with the original PIN policies that Boards had a massive amount of variation between them when not having the authority to do so – and this may increase the amount of escalation questions.

Positive comments were made around the digital format of the NHSScotland workforce policies and how this has addressed concerns over version control associated with the previous paper format. It was noted that perhaps there was an opportunity to share the programme approach for other work areas through governance groups such as the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance (SWAG) Committee.

6. Business as Usual proposal

CH referred to the paper which was discussed at the last meeting and has been updated in view of comments. Updates have been highlighted in yellow text and include: more details about the review group, that escalated queries will be in scope and the steps for new policy development process. CH noted that the proposal is currently very high level and as discussed at the last Programme Board meeting, if members agree with the updated proposal we will progress to SWAG.

Further scoping will consider the details such as the tripartite policy review process. It's likely that new policy development group will look similar to existing provision so far as any new policy will have a soft launch prior to 'go live' and will have engagement including a consultation exercise.

We also need to consider how we would go about the extant policy review piece of work, starting with phase 1 policies.

KB offered that the paper has some really sensible conversations around the twin track of legal revision and practical application, but raised concerns for future policy development. He noted the need for continued engagement and for the role of SWAG to be clear and visible in the process. He referred to

interpretation challenges that exist across the tripartite arrangements and the need for careful handling.

CH acknowledged the need for a tripartite group post programme and the need to engage appropriate stakeholders and subject matter experts in the review process.

NP noted the potential availability challenges associated with a small number of representatives on a tripartite review group. He suggested that the Programme board interpretation in function of any escalated query would be done by SWAG Secretariat in the first instance and if it couldn't be agreed then it could be escalated to a full SWAG.

NP also referred to the SG Assurance process noting that he would like to see a process to ensure that this will be undertaken at the same time as the CLO review of policies, with the SG assurance process working within the same timeline.

7. AOB

CS updated members on the situation with the draft NHSScotland Gender Transitioning Guide. She referred to the recent letter to Boards that confirmed that we will be starting to review this guide and highlighted that we will not conclude this work until it has been considered in view of the EHRC Code of Practice when this has been published. CS noted the timescales involved citing that the code would need to be before Parliament for 40 days before it'll be implemented. She noted that it is expected that EHRC will also publish an employer code of practice and this is likely to be towards the middle of next year. Meanwhile, the work to start reviewing the guide will be using a tripartite approach in partnership. We recognise that there is the need to update the guide to make sure it's compliant with the law, but also remains compassionate.

GM questioned if the Scottish Government will give robust advice that Board interpretations of the law should be the same until the national guidance is confirmed.

CS advised this wouldn't be something SG would do and that Boards need to seek their own legal advice and they've been encouraged to do so. CLO has a role in that in providing advice.

CH confirmed next meeting is scheduled for 27 November.

END

