

NHS Western Isles
AREA PARTNERSHIP FORUM



Minute of Meeting

20th January 2022 10.00-1.00
via MS Teams

Members Present:

Gordon Jamieson	Chief Executive (Co-Chair)
Dana Murray	Employee Director (Co-Chair)
Jane Bain	RCN
Diane Macdonald	HR Manager
Nick Fayers	IJB Chief Officer
Shuna Mighton	Society of Radiographers
Gillian Tait	RCN
Fiona MacKenzie	Nurse/AHP Director/COO
Stuart King	Organisational Development and Learning Manager
Maggie Jamieson	Head of Communication and Patient Information
Debbie Bozkurt	Director of Finance and Procurement

In Attendance:

Dianne Weatherston	PA to Director of HR and Workforce Development
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1. WELCOME/APOLOGIES

Mrs Murray took the chair and welcomed those present.

Apologies were noted from Wendy Dunsmore, Chris Ann Munro, Lachie MacPherson and Maggie Watts

2. MINUTES

2.1 Draft Minute 22nd December 2021

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2.2 Action Points 22nd December 2021

The Action Points were updated as per the log.

3. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising were noted.

4. COVID-19 BRIEF

Cases

Mr Jamieson advised that there have been 429 cases so far this month. This is significantly up from this point last month. Cases continue to increase month on month. Thankfully, hospital admissions are still very low. Most outbreaks are related to gatherings, which people are allowed to have e.g. weddings, funerals etc.

All samples that have been sent away have the 'S' gene drop out which is indicative of Omicron. This appears to be the dominant strain locally as well as nationally. Omicron remains mild in its severity for most people.

Testing

Testing is at a very manageable level. As per Scottish Government (SG) guidance, we are now accepting LFDs as a positive result. For health and social care staff, we will continue to follow up with a PCR as there is still a reliability issue around LFDs. However, for the public, LFD results can be accepted without PCR follow up.

Mrs Murray asked if there is any indication how long testing will go on for. She asked if there would always be a requirement to test. Mr Jamieson stated that NHSWI are holding the line that we would like confirmatory PCR on all health and social care staff. He is not aware of any pull back on LFD testing.

Community Assessment Centre

Mr Jamieson visited the Community Assessment Centre with Mr Douglas Mackenzie and Mr Colin Robertson. Some important improvements are being made to the area including a new heater above the door, a new door with a window panel, some of the beach hedge will be removed and some more mono-block will be laid so people attending for swabbing can come up to the door.

The move to Sandwick School has fallen through due to the age of the building and the capital work that would be required.

Vaccination

Vaccination continues to go well. The team are about to embark on another busy phase. 16-17 will be invited for booster, 12-15 year olds are now eligible to receive two doses and 5-11 year olds will shortly be invited for first dose which will be a specific paediatric dose. Parents will be required to make a judgement on whether they give their child the vaccine. Myocarditis is the main risk we have been asked to flag up to parents.

Some central UK intelligence has been brought to Mr Jamieson's attention. It's believed that anti-vaxers are planning some significant protests at clinics today and tomorrow. It's not expected that there will be any major issues locally, however Mr Jamieson went to the Co-op this morning to speak to staff and reassure them.

Restrictions

A relaxation of restrictions has been announced by SG, which is more focussed for members of the public rather than health and social care establishments. NHSWI will have a status quo position until otherwise instructed.

Elective Surgery

Some elective surgery will restart at the end of the month focusing on day cases and orthopaedic joint replacements to start with. 70% of the backlog are day cases.

Decision: The update was noted.

5. FINANCE

5.1 Current Update

Ms Bozkurt advised that there is no paper for presentation today as SG are now doing quarterly updates.

A breakeven position is forecast. Most of the financial pressures are due to COVID and winter surge. We have a significant underlying deficit, which is no different to any other Board.

Capital wise, we hopefully have all the money for the Uist and Barra Dental Hub. SG have been very supportive with this.

Ms Bozkurt hopes that by the next APF she will be able to share the full month 9 report.

Decision: The update was noted.

6. WORKFORCE REPORT

Mrs Macdonald presented the revamped Workforce Report and took the group through some of the highlights in the report.

There is an increase of 25 WTEs from November 2020 to November 2021. This is primarily due to the need for extra COVID resources.

The ageing workforce will be looked at in more detail when workforce planning.

Attendance has been broken down. There has been an increasing trend, which the HR department will focus on. Fatigue and burnout could be a reason for that. Mrs Macdonald hopes that HR can provide some attendance management training for managers.

Mrs Macdonald went through 'sickness absence by reason' and highlighted the top three reasons which are anxiety/stress, musculoskeletal and unknown causes. Some areas were highlighted to Mrs Macdonald who are using unknown causes as a recording reason. She has sent them a gentle email reminder to ensure there is an improvement in recording.

Nationally, there is a big push on international recruitment. There is potentially a place for this locally, however there are also reservations around it. This will be monitored as it progresses.

Mrs Macdonald gave an update on recruitment. Mrs Mighton asked if it may be worthwhile to check how many applicants actually meet the minimum requirements of the post they've applied for. She also questioned if the housing situation locally is a contributory factor when applicants withdraw from the recruitment process. Mrs Macdonald noted that there are issues with securing short-term lets throughout the islands. Some posts are allocated key worker status, which can help with this. She added that applicants withdrawing isn't a large scale issue, but there is the occasional one.

Mr Jamieson asked for clarification around Mrs Mighton's point in relation to applicants not meeting the minimum requirement of the post. Mrs Mighton explained that she isn't suggesting there are issues with the recruitment process, or that the wrong people are being employed. Her query relates to, for example, ten applicants apply for a post, and only one or two can be shortlisted, as the majority don't meet the minimum requirements of the post.

Mr Jamieson stated that if there is a minimum spec, then that is the spec the job has been banded and advertised. If managers then lower the bar, they should go back out to advert, as there may be people out there who meet a slightly lower threshold. He added that discussions are ongoing regarding more exploration in terms of recruitment e.g. social media could be used to advertise the islands, different relationships with schools, apprenticeships etc. The aim is to encourage more people to stay on the islands. Mr Jamieson noted that the organisation should worry less about taking apprenticeships on. The workforce needs are there and they are only going to increase.

Mrs Tait noted that some of the posts have been advertised quite a few times. She asked if the Board are looking at upskilling and training existing staff for some of the specialist posts. Mr King is working on this. He is looking to have a renewed focus on Turas appraisal so that will hopefully

provide a platform for staff to have conversations with their managers in terms of developing and working towards specialist roles.

Mrs Macdonald noted that care needs to be taken to ensure managers are appropriately trained around the recruited process, to ensure they are bringing the right people into the organisation. She added that upskilling will be a focus and there will be more detail on this in the Workforce Plan, which is to be submitted in July 2022.

Decision: The update was noted.

7. CLINICAL STRATEGY

7.1 St. Brendan's Project/OOH and St Brendan's

The cost exercise paper is being finalised. It's still a high cost although it has been reduced from £86 million to approximately £67 million. There is still attention from the Barra community regarding the model itself. The model has now been written down in a way that was needed for the case, but it doesn't contain any new information. This will likely go back to SG for re-endorsement of their commitment.

Mr Fayers stated that irrespective of SG's decision. We will need to be clear in terms of what our staffing requirements will be.

Decision: The update was noted.

7.2 OOH/Unscheduled Care

Ms MacKenzie provided a brief update as Dr McAuley wasn't in attendance at today's meeting. She advised that work is moving on at pace. Mrs Susan Macaulay is focussing on this and she is doing a lot of work around the nurse led service. Dr McAuley is pursuing a lot of other work around OOH and unscheduled care.

Decision: The update was noted.

7.3 New GP Contract

No update. Mr Fayers is waiting for SG to define what the amount of funding will be.

8. ISOLATION GUIDANCE FOR CLOSE CONTACTS

Mr Jamieson explained that the new isolation guidance for close contacts came out to allow quicker returns to work, which has mainly been to assist Boards who are in extremely difficult situations. Thankfully, this isn't the case locally, and bringing people back to work early would be a greater risk. This will be of no detriment to the individual, and it's to protect the service.

Mrs Bain asked for some comms to be issued to highlight what is fact and what is fiction. There are some fears amongst staff on the floor. Mr Jamieson noted that the guidance and risk assessment is there to support managers and staff. Mrs Jamieson advised that the risk assessment has been issued to all mail users and it will go on the intranet.

Mrs Mighton explained a recent situation in the radiology department whereby all staff who were at work on a particular day were asked to go for a PCR test as a precaution. They were assured they hadn't been identified as close contacts but were asked to come in for PCRs on their days off over the weekend. Other people presumed they were close contacts and the PCR paperwork stated that. Mrs Mighton noted that the whole situation and reason for being tested was very unclear. Mr Jamieson will ask Dr Watts and the public health team for clarification on the reason for requesting the PCRs and he will feed back to Mrs Mighton.

Mrs Mighton added that Radiology staff request the records be amended and perhaps a comms should be issued to staff to highlight that people being asked to take a PCR may not always be close contacts. Mr Jamieson took Mrs Mighton's concerns on Board.

Decision. The update was noted. Mr Jamieson will ask Dr Watts for clarification why a group of radiology staff were asked to take PCRs, and feedback to Mrs Mighton.

9. ANNUAL LEAVE POLICY

The Annual Leave Policy was presented for approval. Questions were raised regarding previous employment, specifically armed forces. It was agreed that reckonable/continuous service will be looked at as a separate policy.

Mrs Tait left the meeting

The group agreed that if the policy requires to be subsequently amended due to work that goes on in a parallel stream regarding reckonable service, it will come back to the Policy Review Group and APF.

Decision: The APF approved the Annual Leave Policy. Mrs Macdonald to look at reckonable/continuous service as a separate policy.

10. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

The Recruitment and Selection Policy was presented for approval.

No comments were noted.

Decision: The APF approved the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

11. INJURY ALLOWANCE POLICY

The Injury Allowance Policy was presented for approval.

Mrs Bain noted that Mrs Munro raised some comments in relation to this policy at a staff side meeting yesterday, however she isn't in attendance at today's APF.

The group discussed the policy. Conversations took place around stress at work. Mrs Macdonald stated that stress at work is not an industrial injury, and she doesn't believe this would fall into the eligible criteria for this policy.

Mrs Jamieson explained that the amended policy has been tightened up, so it should be a fairer policy for the employee. Mr Jamieson added that this policy isn't used to disadvantage staff. It ensures that they have no detriment.

The group agreed to approve the policy, and to have it noted that an issue was raised around stress at work. If anyone has further comments, they should be sent to Mrs Weatherston prior to the next APF meeting.

Decision: The APF approved the Injury Allowance Policy. If anyone has further comments, they should be sent to Mrs Weatherston prior to the next APF meeting.

12. ROSTER POLICY

The Roster Policy was presented for approval.

Staff side requested that this policy be taken off today's Agenda for approval. They have looked at Roster policies from other Boards, and they believe that this policy could be more streamlined.

Mrs Mighton stated that the policy reads very much as if it's for areas that work a shift pattern. Now that she has seen policies from other Boards she believes this policy could be more generic. Ms MacKenzie agrees that the policy does go into detail, however she believes this is required, especially in terms of what the allowances are. Mrs Mighton suggested that the policy could be much shorter and based more on principles. The examples could be in the appendices.

Ms MacKenzie raised concerns that this policy has been on the table since she started in post. She asked why staff side's queries are being brought up at this late stage. Mrs Mighton stated that due to work pressures and clinical workload, she hasn't been able to give the policy her attention as she would if they were in a different situation.

The group agreed to defer the approval of this policy. Ms MacKenzie suggested that staff side colleagues be heavily involved in the reviewing of this policy.

Decision: The APF agreed to defer the approval of the Roster Policy pending further review. Staff side colleagues to be involved in the review. Mrs Weatherston to add Roster Policy to the next Policy Review Group.

13. EXTENSION TO SICK PAY GUIDE AND FORM

Mr King presented the Extension to Sick Pay paper for approval. Mr King highlighted that this has been available for years through T&Cs, however this paper was written to ensure there is a robust process in place.

Mrs Bain noted that her main concern is in section 3, which states that 'requests must be made no more than two weeks before or after the date full or half pay changes'. Mr King advised that all employees should get a letter from payroll, which outlines their pay dates. He added that there has to be some sort of timescale as to when someone can put this application in. Mrs Mighton noted that some staff members have informed her that they haven't received a letter from payroll. Clarification is needed to ascertain when they receive this, how its issued, and if the manager is copied in. Mrs Macdonald stated that as long as SSTS is up to date, the sickness absence notification will go to the employee and manager.

Mr Jamieson stated that timescales should be pushed well inside for when pay is going to change. He added that it is a separate issue if managers aren't keeping SSTS up to date. Mr Jamieson suggested some awareness for staff to advise that there is the ability to request an extension. He would like to see this process being more proactive rather than reactive, and not over complicated. Mrs Mighton agreed with Mr Jamieson in terms of being proactive.

Mr King suggested changing this to say that 'requests must be made prior to any change in pay'. The group agreed to this amendment.

Mr Jamieson asked if there could be a formal question asked at first and second case conference to check if the staff member foresees that an extension may be required. Mr King agreed. Mrs Bain suggested that managers be trained to look out for this. Mrs Macdonald agreed. She added that there is an employee responsibility in this, as well as manager responsibility.

Mr King suggested writing a wider policy for this, and have the paper presented today as an appendix. The group agreed.

Mrs Jamieson asked if this paper could be approved in the meantime until a policy is written, so that managers have something to work in line with. Mrs Murray confirmed that staff side colleagues would not willing to approve this paper today.

Decision: The APF did not approve the Extension to Sick Pay paper.

Action: Mr King to write a wider Extension to Sick Pay Policy. The paper presented today will be added as an appendix.

14. WELLBEING

Mr King advised that the Wellbeing Group has been expanded. Discussions are underway on the way forward and a further update will be available at the next meeting.

Mr King asked staff side members to encourage attendance at the Focus Groups. These groups will be interactive sessions and he would value hearing from staff.

Decision: The update was noted.

15. FOR INFORMATION

15.1 DL(2021)47 Incremental Credit for New Employees

Noted for information.

15.2 Directors Letter - DL(2021)53 - Temporary Changes to Fit Notes

Noted for information.

16. AOB

Platinum Jubilee Public Holiday

Mrs Mighton asked if NHS staff will be entitled to the extra Platinum Jubilee Public Holiday this year. Mrs Macdonald advised that no confirmation has been received yet. Mrs Mighton asked if the rest of the public holidays could be issued. Mrs Jamieson will circulate these to all staff.

Mrs Murray closed the meeting and thanked all for their attendance.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Date: 8th March 2022

Time: 10.00-1.00 via Teams

END