

NHS Western Isles
AREA PARTNERSHIP FORUM



Minute of Meeting

20th April 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
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
Alana MacPhee	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Maggie Watts	Director of Public Health
Chris Ann Munro	UNISON

In Attendance:

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

Mr Jamieson took the chair and welcomed those present.

Apologies were noted from Shuna Mighton.

2. MINUTES

2.1 Draft Minute 20th January 2022

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2.2 Action Points 20th January 2022

The Action Points were updated as per the log.

3. MATTERS ARISING

No matter arising were noted.

4. COVID-19 BRIEF

Testing

Mr Jamieson advised that changes to testing were implemented on 18th April and further changes will be implemented from 30th April 2022.

The whole approach to testing has changed. From 30th April, testing will move to an 'on clinical grounds' basis. The country are moving away from the open approach where anyone could test as regularly as they wished. PCR testing will still be available for people with clinical needs.

The language in communications from Scottish Government (SG) has changed considerably, for example, people are encouraged to wear facemasks, rather than this being an instruction or law. Further guidance is expected from SG, and following this, we will be in a stronger position to confirm the position to staff and to the public.

The testing demand has eased significantly for the labs. Having said that, the lab have some fairly new pressures due to some staff leaving. This is putting the people available in the lab under pressure.

Vaccinations

The spring vaccination campaign continues.

COVID Rates

Dr Watts shared some slides on screen, which saw a graph detailing the national COVID rates in Scotland. At one point, the Western Isles hit the highest rate per 100,000 ever recorded in Scotland. We continue to have the highest rate in Scotland as of last week. Dr Watts highlighted that it is understandable that staff are feeling stretched and stressed.

Dr Watts also shared some slides in relation to Test and Protect. SG has moved away from trying to control or eliminate the virus. We move to learning to live with the virus as it becomes endemic. There will be no contact tracing by the end of April 2022.

Mr Jamieson reflected on the journey we've been on and highlighted this as a period of significant change as society tries to coexist alongside COVID. He noted the importance of trying to get through as much catch-up work as we can now. If a variant of concern appears then we would be expected to react at a moment's notice. In the next few months, we need to plan for a ward with people who are in hospital for something else e.g. a broken ankle, but they also have COVID.

Mr Jamieson referred to the closure of the Lighthouse Lab. He asked if there is an opportunity to attract anyone who was employed there to come and work in the lab at WIH. Mr Jamieson suggested Mrs Macdonald have a conversation about this with Mr Briggs and/or via her HR connections.

Action – Mrs Macdonald to speak to Mr Briggs and/or her HR connections to check if there is an opportunity to attract Lighthouse employees to come to work in the WIH lab, following the closure of the Lighthouse.

5. FINANCE

5.1 Current Update

Mrs Bozkurt presented the paper which was circulated prior to the meeting.

SG have given the Board COVID funds, which have had a positive impact financially. The Board has been fully funded for all COVID pressures and winter surge pressures.

SG have also give the Board £2.6 million to carry forward for health and social care. Money for next year which will need to be divided between NHSWI and partners. Ms Bozkurt will be asking her exec colleagues what they want to spend the money on in advance.

There is still a £2-3 million underlying deficit due to cost pressures including the employment of agency staff in wards, sending patients away to the mainland and high cost drugs.

Ms Bozkurt advised that voluntary sectors put in bids for money. That concluded on 30th March. Some communication will be released into the community.

We are seeing some severe situations in terms of capital projects for 2022-23. The main project was to replace the boilers at WIH. Installation has come in at double the original price due to the stainless steel crisis caused by the war in Ukraine.

Ms Bozkurt advised that she includes workforce graphs in this report which is circulated to SG. She does this to make SG aware of our recruitment/population issues and our inability to recruit. We are in a crisis in recruitment due to the population. This issue has been highlighted since 2007. Financially it also causes a problem, as we will need to rely on agency staff.

Mrs Tait referred to the use of agency staff. She asked if there is reassurance from the Board that they are looking at recruitment and retention. Ms Bozkurt stated that this is not just an island problem, and that solutions need to come from a higher level.

Ms Bozkurt highlighted that we cannot find property for agency staff, even if we do manage to recruit them. This is a huge issue particularly for Uist and Barra. She added that lots of issues are adding to the problems. Mrs Tait noted the importance of retaining the staff that are currently employed.

Ms MacKenzie and Mrs Jamieson joined the meeting

Mrs MacPhee stated that this is not something new that has been highlighted to SG. Over the last 6 years, the lack of physiotherapy provision has been highlighted, however no plan has been devised yet. Ms Bozkurt agreed, and noted difficulties with youngsters leaving the island. Around 57% decide to move away from the island. We've also had 2 years of extremely low birth rates. She added that in 5-10 years times, the school roles will be significantly decreased. Mrs Macdonald stated that these issues will be highlighted in the Workforce Plan.

Mrs Tait asked if RRP been considered. Mr Jamieson stated that RRP is in place for Pharmacy and for the Trades. He is concerned that it has moved beyond the small niche groups we had before, however he is not sure what the answer is. Mr Jamieson stated that if the decline in numbers keep going, the system is not sustainable and the range of services is not sustainable. He wants to look at more engagement with central government and others, to get their attention. The Annual Review is coming up which will be a good opportunity to get a strong message across and get it on a more formal footing to see what response we get. Mr Jamieson noted that his concern is about the whole community of the Outer Hebrides.

Mrs Macdonald referred to Island Proofing and the Islands Bill. She asked if this has a context for us that could be pursued. Mr Jamieson advised that he has seen this written in documents however he has questions over what it actually translates to. He is yet to see much in the way of concrete evidence. He added that we need to figure out as a country and a set of islands what it actually means and to tease it out with SG.

Ms Bozkurt gave a brief update regarding St Brendan's. She advised that they are going to SG to get agreement on the new price and discussions are ongoing in terms of land acquisition. A community chat meeting is taking place just now, which Ms Bozkurt is leaving to attend.

Decision: The update was noted.

Ms Bozkurt left the meeting

6. **WORKFORCE REPORT**

Mrs Macdonald presented the January and February reports which were circulated prior to the meeting. She went through the February report in detail.

Following earlier discussions around population demographics, Mr King has been doing some work on apprenticeships. He has attended some career fairs, and the feedback he received in terms of young people wanting to stay on the island was positive.

There has been a rise in turnover. The pension regulation changes potentially saw more people retiring in March 2022, however the pandemic could also attribute to that. This will be monitored going forward.

There is a high percentage of sickness absence in dentistry. There are gaps in managing this area due to having a part time dental director and the business manager being absent.

In the March Workforce Report, we will likely see a dramatic rise in COVID special leave, which will reflect the community transmission during that month. Mrs Macdonald stated that these special leave categories will need review going forward, as we live with the endemic virus.

In terms of recruitment, vacancies continue to be advertised at a steady rate. There is a decreasing trend of applications being received, however there has been some success in recruitment. Other options are going to be looked at for podiatry recruitment, possibly international recruitment. We need to think through how we would approach international recruitment and support staff relocating to such a unique rural environment.

Medics posts have been re-advertised and the dental director post will be re-advertised in May. Both those campaigns are in progress.

Mr Jamieson referred to the peak in applications and the drop off. He noted it would be helpful to get some insight as to whether the two significant high points were relating to specific types of jobs. He noted the positive update about progress regarding the difficult to recruit AHP posts.

Mr Jamieson referred to the issue of getting people to stay on the island. He believes we need to come off the fence and do our own thing in terms of recruitment fares, for example hiring a hall somewhere, having a team of people go out on a road show. He stated that we need to check when young people are starting to make their decisions, and tell them what the access routes are, as well as providing them with some support and help.

Mrs Murray agreed that we need to think outside the box in terms of attracting people to the WI. She suggested reaching out to final year university students, perhaps by recording a generic NHS video that they could view if they are considering where they want to work. NHS Grampian ran a similar TV advert a few years ago. Ms MacKenzie noted that this was spoken about in nursing circles.

Mrs MacKenzie stated that nursing Band 4 work has begun with NES, and they are also encouraging Boards to do this locally. We can also look at that for AHPs. Mr Jamieson agreed that the Band 4 territory is exciting and we need to pursue that. Mrs Tait noted that from a RCN perspective, she has some concerns around the Band 4 posts providing dilution for the Band 5s.

Mrs Tait asked if the retirals are retiring completely or would they come back to work on the bank. Mrs Macdonald doesn't have that data but she can look into it.

Mrs Tait referred to the high number of anxiety cases. Is it possible to categorise this into work related and personal. Mrs Macdonald doesn't believe SSTS allows that however it is also something she would like to see. She added that it could also be a combination of the two.

Mrs Tait referred to reports that some nurses are being utilised for portering, e.g. taking patients to theatre and moving samples around. Ms MacKenzie explained that a clinical porter is needed, and this is something that is being looking at. Ms MacKenzie suggested she meet Mrs Tait and other staff side colleagues to discuss post COVID recovery. Mrs Tait agreed this would be helpful.

Mrs Bain asked if we can strengthen ties with the universities. Regarding remote learning, island young people are adaptable to this. Mr Jamieson agrees that we need to have a better relationship with educational partners.

Decision: The update was noted. Ms Mackenzie will meet with Mrs Tait and other staff side colleagues to discuss post COVID recovery.

7. CLINICAL STRATEGY

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

Ms Bozkurt provided a brief update under Item 5.1.

7.2 OOH/Unscheduled Care

No paper presented at the meeting. Models are continuing across the islands and the journey is ongoing to get the models right.

Mrs Tait noted it would be good to see what the models are based on. She would appreciate an update from Dr McAuley at a future meeting.

Ms MacKenzie noted that we are progressing really well with the OOH work in terms of optimising flow and ANPs. Ms MacKenzie would be happy to provide Mrs Tait with a more in-depth update outwith the meeting. Mrs Tait agreed that would be helpful.

Decision: The update was noted. Ms MacKenzie and Mrs Tait to discuss OOH further out-with the meeting.

7.3 New GP Contract

Mr Fayers gave a brief update. He highlighted that we are delivering all of the elements of CTAC and that the Western Isles is the first partnership in Scotland to achieve this. Significant progress is being made.

Mrs MacPhee noted that one of the most significant hurdles to flexibility in working is IT and not being able to access joint systems. Dr Watts noted that we are trying hard to make sure that people can access systems remotely and safely. If an employee requires remote working, that shouldn't be an issue to set up. Dr Watts noted that it is not possible to access more than one GP practice. She will contact Grampian and Highland to ask what their set up is, in comparison to NHSWI.

Decision: The update was noted. Dr Watts will contact Grampian and Highland to ask what their set up is for remote access.

8. APF ANNUAL REPORT

Not presented. Defer to the next meeting.

9. APPRENTICESHIPS

Mr King referred to the paper circulated ahead of the meeting. From the recruitment fares, it was highlighted that people didn't understand the wide roles available within the NHS. We need to be establishing our own career fares and working alongside education. Some of the young people said they were keen to stay on the island, in particular due to the increasing cost of living and their parents not being able to afford to send them away. Some of the young people talked about security of employment. Having an employer who provides secure employment is something young people are now looking at.

Mrs Tait noted this positive work, and hopefully some new recruits will come off the back of this. She asked if the modern apprenticeship scheme will be expanded to current members of staff. Mr King confirmed that no one is exempt and that anyone can apply. This is not overly targeted to a specific group of people.

Mrs Bain noted that a good time to start doing this is from the beginning of 6th year. She highlighted that young people are much more economically aware having been through a pandemic.

Decision: The update was noted.

10. WELLBEING

The Wellbeing Group were due to meet ahead of APF, however this was postponed due to school holidays and a high number of apologies. The meeting will take place on Tuesday 26th April.

Mrs Macdonald and Mr King had an implementation call for the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) on Friday. The EAP offers a variety of support to staff and their families, and is available 24/7, 365 days a year. If anyone has any queries around this service, please email Mr King.

Decision: The update was noted. Queries regarding the EAP to be emailed to Mr King.

11. TURAS APPRAISAL

Mr King presented the paper which was circulated ahead of the meeting.

So far, 12 sessions have been delivered for staff and managers. Sessions were well attended. There is now an employee Turas guide available on the HR intranet. It goes through the process from sign in, right to the end of the appraisal period. Mr King hopes to run a training session monthly or bi-monthly.

Mr Jamieson advised that he doesn't expect this to happen overnight. He asked if there is a mechanism in place to monitor performance against reasonable milestones, whilst accepting this is a long journey. Mr King advised that he gets a report every Monday. He will analyse that information and present it in a way that we can tackle some of the hotspots.

Ms MacKenzie noted that this will take some time for all the reasons we know. She added that the 'pink book' is going to be reinstated here, along with a review of the role of the SCN. The SCNs we have in place need a bit of support and development. That is something we will be taking forward with them. Mrs Robertson and others will ensure they have their own development.

Decision: The update was noted.

12. HCA BAND 2 to BAND 3

Mrs Macdonald presented the paper which was circulated prior to the meeting. This paper has been brought to the meeting today to reassure the APF that NHSWI are taking forward the national decision on this. Mrs Kennedy, Employee Relations Officer is leading on this piece of work, and a working group has been set up. She has started looking at the job descriptions, and she has also

began to have conversations with the staff affected. Progress is ongoing and implementation will continue.

Mr Jamieson asked if every Band 2 is being reviewed, or just those recruited in the last 'x' number of months. He asked for more detail in terms of the governance, and when this will come back to the APF. Clarification is also required on the role of the working group and whether this will go through the normal evaluation route.

Mrs Macdonald advised that she will present a more in-depth report at the next meeting, taking on board Mr Jamieson queries.

Decision: The update was noted.

Action: Mrs Macdonald to present a more in-depth report at the next meeting.

13. FOR INFORMATION

13.1 STAC(TCS01)2022 - Public Holidays and COVID

Noted for information.

13.2 DL(2022)01 Updated 25.01.22 Self Isolation HSC Staff

Noted for information.

13.3 DL(2022)02 - Platinum Jubilee

13.4 DL(2022)08 - The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Mrs Macdonald asked for some comms to be issued highlighting that the Platinum Jubilee holiday has been changed from an additional annual leave day to a set public holiday on Friday 3rd June.

Mrs Jamieson issued comms directly after the meeting.

13.5 DL(2022)03 - NHS Scotland Job Evaluation Policy

Noted for information.

13.6 NHS_Circular_2022-04_Employee_contribution_tiers_from_1_April_2022_v2

Noted for information.

13.7 PCS(AFC)2022-1 - Organisational Change Pay Protection

Noted for information.

AOB

Rehydrating on the Wards

Mrs Murray highlighted an issue which was raised at a recent staff side meeting. Some employees have informed staff side colleagues that they are being challenged when trying to take a drink of water while working on the wards. Mr Jamieson stated that the Boards view is that staff need to keep hydrated, and that they will ensure this is the case.

Mr Jamieson explained that free bottled water, fresh fruit and cartons of juice have been handed out to staff when they have been feeling overburdened. Staff need to be hydrated when they are at work, and we need to make sure that there is an area in the ward where staff can regularly access adequate fluids and nutrition.

Ms MacKenzie added that there were some issues when there was a particular outbreak in terms of staff moving their mask down to take a drink, and then putting it up again. While this is a breach, equally they need to stay hydrated. Ms MacKenzie will discuss this with the ward teams.

Ms MacKenzie advised that Mr George MacIver is issuing recovery packages to staff. Mrs Munro asked if the recovery packages are for all staff, or nursing only. Ms MacKenzie believes they are for all staff. She will confirm this with Mr MacIver.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Date: 8th June 2022

Time: 10.00-1.00 via Teams

END

APPROVED