

NHS Western Isles
AREA PARTNERSHIP FORUM



Minute of Meeting

30th September 2022 10.00-12.30
via MS Teams

Members Present:

Gordon Jamieson	Chief Executive (Co-Chair)
Dana Murray	Employee Director (Co-Chair)
Diane Macdonald	HR Manager
Shuna Mighton	Society of Radiographers
Lena Morrison	Employee Relations Officer
Lachlan MacPherson	Hospitals Manager
Maggie Jamieson	Head of Communications and Patient Information

In Attendance:

Dianne Weatherston	PA to Director of HR and Workforce Development
Margaret MacRae	RCN

1. WELCOME/APOLOGIES

Mrs Murray took the chair and welcomed those present.

Apologies were noted from Fiona MacKenzie, Frank McAuley, Nick Fayers, Jane Bain, Debbie Bozkurt, Alana MacPhee, Chris Ann Munro, Maggie Watts and Stuart King.

2.1 Draft Minute 18th August 2022

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2.2 Action Points 18th August 2022

The Action Points were updated as per the log.

3. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising were noted.

4. COVID-19 BRIEF

Vaccination

Winter vaccinations are ongoing and the programme will run until December. The uptake in care homes has been good, however the turnout of health and social care (HSC) staff at clinics has been very low. Some further work will be done to promote vaccinations amongst HSC staff and peer vaccinators will be asked to consider vaccinating their colleagues.

Mrs Murray asked if there are low levels of HSC staff coming forward for vaccination across Scotland, or is the Western Isles an outlier. Mr Jamieson stated it would appear that nationally, levels are lower than expected in many areas.

Testing

Some revised guidance will be circulated following issue of a DL regarding testing. Guidance will be issued to provide clarification on the position.

Facemasks

Facemasks are encouraged to be retained in healthcare settings, particularly in clinic areas.

5. FINANCE

5.1 Current Update

5.2 Forward Look

Mr Jamieson provided an update in Ms Bozkurt's absence.

He stated that a savings plan requires to be submitted to Scottish Government (SG) today. A £1.3 million overspend is predicted. There continues to be a lot of pressure in the system. The agency spend in some areas is extremely high. It's important to recruit and attract people to substantial roles. The use of agency must be a last resort. The savings plan will be tabled at the next APF for discussion.

Mr Jamieson noted concerns about staff and the pressures they are going to feel, particularly in winter, due to the rising cost of living, energy, fuel and food. Recruitment is still very challenging in many areas. Staff wellbeing will be monitored and this will be a priority on the agenda.

There are significant pressures across the HSC partnership and there are cost pressures in unscheduled care. In terms of waiting initiatives and catching up post COVID, the organisation is doing very well. Our population will be well served compared to a lot of other areas. There are still waiting lists but no one is waiting over 12 weeks for an outpatient appointment or over 1 year for surgical intervention unless they are medically exempt. The system is doing very well.

Ms MacRae noted that all Boards are reporting an increase in agency spend. Recruitment and retention is also an issue. The RCN want to support that work and make sure establishments are appropriate. One of the RCN's biggest campaigns is around the progress of safe staffing work. Mr Jamieson stated that as a nurse, he regularly thinks about how important safe staffing is, however he is anxious regarding how it's going to play out. It will be applied at a time when recruitment has never been more challenging. He added that the acuity of patients is increasing and that puts a lot of pressure on staff.

Mrs Mighton requested that staff side be involved when staffing establishments are being reviewed. Mrs Murray agreed.

Decision: The update was noted.

6. WORKFORCE REPORT

Mrs Macdonald went through the Workforce Report.

Turnover remains around 8% rate. It should be noted that turnover elsewhere is higher and NHSWI have the lowest percentage in Scotland.

Sickness absence is fluctuating between 5-6%. This is being managed proactively through attendance management with managers.

Dental support and health science have the highest rates of absence. HR have been working with Mr Fayers to manage some of the absences in dental. Hopefully this will decrease once there is dental management in place.

There has been a noted decrease in absences being recorded in the 'unknown causes not specified' category. Communication has been issued to managers and progress is being made.

Musculoskeletal absences have been broken and it was found that predominantly these occur in nursing/midwifery and dental. Mr Dawson is going to work with the dental team on their moving and handling and ensuring risk assessments are up to date.

Most of the recruitment activity has been in nursing/midwifery. Seven newly qualified nurses were recruited in August. A podiatrist has been recruited which is very positive considering the difficulties there are in recruiting to this area.

Ms MacRae thanked Mrs Macdonald for the comprehensive report. She suggested more detail be added to the report to highlight where the gaps are in recruitment. Mrs Macdonald took the point on board.

Mr Jamieson suggested it may be useful to have retire and return figures in the report going forward, so it can be monitored e.g. if someone only wants to come back two days then you are left with a three day post to fill. Mrs Macdonald noted that there is flexibility with this kind of circumstance. The retire and return application can be accepted on the basis that you can recruit to the other days of the post.

Mrs Mighton suggested it would be helpful to have some case studies around retire and return to help staff understand the process. Mrs Macdonald agreed and advised that there are plans in place for this. A session has also been carried out with managers through the HR drop-in.

Decision: The update was noted.

7. CLINICAL STRATEGY

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

Mr Jamieson advised that progress is being made. There is a gap between cost and funding, with the majority of the gap sitting in other elements of the project rather than health. There is lots of work going on to close that gap. The Outline Business Case is being submitted on 30th October. Overall, the project is not likely to reach financial close until into 2023.

Decision: The update was noted.

7.2 OOH/Unscheduled Care

No paper submitted and Dr McAuley was not in attendance to provide a verbal update.

7.3 New GP Contract

No paper submitted and Mr Fayers was not in attendance to provide a verbal update.

8. REMOTE/FLEXIBLE WORK LOCATION

Mrs Macdonald presented the report. She added that this report is on the back of some discussions with managers. The issue is where people are requesting to work more remotely i.e. on the mainland. These types of areas tend to be health intelligence and psychology. It is practice in other areas that psychologists are working remotely. However, there is a wider picture here regarding the demography of the WI. As a Board, we want people to live and work here to support the local economy, but we also have recruitment issues. Mrs Macdonald asked for views.

Mrs Mighton noted that she is aware that some staff have been lost to other Health Boards where they are remote working. She thinks it would be worthwhile looking into this.

Mr Jamieson stated that coming through the pandemic has changed the whole mind-set around our position on remote working. We are also seeing the steepest population decline and it looks set to decrease further. While he doesn't want to discriminate, his preference would be for people to come and live and work here in the WI and contribute to the economy. Mrs Macdonald stated that everyone has the right to request flexible working. The employer has the right to grant or refuse the request.

It was agreed that due to the significance of this topic, a separate meeting will be arranged dedicated to this item. Mrs Weatherston will arrange a 1 hour 30 minute meeting. A partnership position will be agreed at the meeting. In the meantime, Mrs Macdonald will progress an audit to find out how many people are located in different areas.

Action: Due to the significance of this topic, a separate meeting will be arranged to discuss and reach a partnership position. Mrs Weatherston will organise.

9. APF MEMBERSHIP REVIEW (Comments from the group)

Mrs Murray presented the papers for consideration.

Ms MacRae notes that the Terms of Reference (ToR) has already been approved, however she has the following comments:

- Page 2 - 'an equal number of management and staff side' isn't necessary. She agrees in having a good spread of management and staff side, however not necessarily 'equal'.
- Most other Board's APF membership refer to the likes of her role being 'in attendance' rather than 'membership'. The local reps should be classed as members, however professional officers should be 'in attendance'.
- Most ToR have a formula for staff side organisation membership that is weighted. There is a big difference between, for example, the British Dietetics Association and UNISON.

Mr Jamieson thanked Ms MacRae for her comments. He takes the view that an approved paper can still be amended, so there is no issue with that.

Mrs Murray noted the importance of ensuring that there are seats available at the APF for the staff side organisations. Active reps are in attendance much more often than not.

Referring to the paper with comments on the membership specifically, it was agreed to keep the Hospitals Manager on the membership list and to add in Organisational Development and Learning Manager.

Action: It was agreed that the ToR will be reviewed, taking note of Ms MacRae's comments. Mrs Weatherston will add it to the Agenda for the next meeting.

10. WELLBEING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Mrs Macdonald presented the papers. These have been developed through the Wellbeing Group. The group are looking at a more proactive, strategic and holistic approach to wellbeing.

Mrs Macdonald, Mrs Murray and Mr King presented on Wellbeing to Ms Caroline Lamb and Mr John Burns last week. Good discussion took place, and they were pleased with how Wellbeing is developing throughout the organisation. Development will continue through the Wellbeing Group. Mr Jamieson noted his thanks for the positive presentation last week.

Mr Jamieson noted the following comments on the Wellbeing Strategy –

- Page 4 – 2.1 – ‘to promote and support the wellbeing across the islands’. It has been highlighted that residents in the southern isles aren’t keen on differentiating between North Uist and South Uist. He asked for the wording to be re-thought.
- Page 5 – 3.6 needs to be expanded. Keep in what is already there, but add to it.
- Page 5 - 3.7 – keep in poor management and add poor employees or change it to poor performance. Heading to be changed.
- Page 9 – 5.5 - add in something about mandatory attendance to use it as an encouragement, so employees feel part of wellbeing and safety in the workplace. This will be helped by attending mandatory training.

Mrs Macdonald agreed with Mr Jamieson’s comments and also highlighted a comment –

- Page 9 – 6.1 – Healthy Working Lives Award to be removed. Add in some of the other awards e.g. disability.

Ms MacRae noted a comment –

- Page 9 – 6.1 - instead of stating reduction in sickness absence levels, she suggested a more positive spin i.e. improved attendance levels.

Decision: The comments were noted. Mrs Weatherston will relay these to Mr King.

11. EAP DATA

Mrs Macdonald presented the EAP data. The programme will continue to be highlighted and promoted to staff going forward.

Decision: The update was noted.

12. VISIBILITY OF APPROVED APF MINTUES

Mrs Murray advised that all Approved APF Minutes will now be available on the intranet and can be accessed by all staff.

Decision: The update was noted.

13. FOR INFORMATION

13.1 DL (2022) 30 NHS Scotland Interim National Arrangement on Retire and Return

13.2 SPPA Circular 2022/08

13.3 DL (2022) 29 - CNO CMO - Asymptomatic testing patients and care home staff - 22 Aug 2022

The DLs and circular were noted for information.

14. AOB

Strike Action

Ms MacRae advised that RCN and other Unions are going to be balloting members about possible strike action and members will be encouraged to participate in this. Proper notification will be issued in due course. Mrs Macdonald noted that ballots have already been received from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, BMA, RCM, RCN and Society of Radiographers.

Mental Health Compensatory Rest

Mrs Mighton asked if the compensatory rest addendum can be added to the Working Time Regulations Policy following review by mental health. Mrs Macdonald agreed. It will be put on the next APF Agenda for final sign off.

Speak up Week

Mrs Jamieson highlighted that Speak up Week takes place next week from 3rd-7th October. Events have been widely advertised to staff.

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

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Date: 2nd November 2022

Time: 10.00-12.30 via Teams

END