

Key Communications

Meeting Date: 25 April 2017

Sir Andrew Cash chaired the 25 April 2017 policy board meeting, which covered an update from Danny Mortimer, chief executive of NHS Employers, on the key pieces of work NHS Employers has been involved in. Danny's report and discussions focussed on: Brexit and workforce supply; protecting whistleblowers seeking jobs in the NHS, consultant contract and pay for apprentices. Ben Dyson, executive director of strategy at NHS Improvement also attended the meeting to engage the policy board on NHS Improvement's workforce priorities.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Danny ran through the programme for the NHS Employers [Workforce Summit](#), which will take place on 13 June in Liverpool. NHS Employers will ask HR directors from NHS organisations to identify their workforce issues in advance of the summit to inform a plenary session with the Department of Health and arm's length bodies. There will also be workshops at the summit, which will give delegates practical ways to address workforce challenges.

In preparation for the discussion with Ben Dyson from NHS Improvement, the policy board identified a number of critical issues for the NHS, including the need to increase the speed of workforce redesign and that good practice should be shared to enable all to learn from successful trailblazers. Staff shortage is another major issue and how difficulties filling vacancies is impacting on service provision and also the ability of the NHS to redesign services and develop new roles. The policy board recognised the need for the NHS to better retain staff.

BREXIT AND WORKFORCE SUPPLY

Caroline Waterfield, assistant director of development and employment at NHS Employers, spoke about how NHS Employers is working as part of the Cavendish Coalition to represent the health and care sector in discussions on Brexit. In total, 35 organisations make up the Coalition. Caroline fed back that other sectors are impressed with how health and care have come together and can put forward a unified voice. The Coalition's next step is to develop evidence to show the potential long-term impact of changes to immigration rules for the health and care sector. This will be used to support discussions with the Migration and Advisory Committee. Policy board recognised the importance of the Coalition having accurate information and the chair will encourage NHS organisations to respond to quarterly requests for information from NHS Employers, NHS Providers and the Shelford Group.

PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS SEEKING JOBS IN THE NHS

The Department of Health is currently running a consultation on legislation to protect whistleblowers from discrimination when applying for jobs in the NHS. Policy board gave a view, which will be incorporated into NHS Employers' consultation response. Members were supportive of the principle and felt that individuals who meet the legal definition of a whistleblower should be protected. They also recognised the importance of NHS organisations having quality recruitment procedures in place.

PAY AND CONTRACTS – CONSULTANT CONTRACT AND PAY FOR APPRENTICES

Paul Wallace, director of employment relations and reward at NHS Employers informed the policy board that discussions between NHS Employers and the BMA, and NHS Employers and HCSA are continuing during the pre-election period. Due to restrictions placed on civil servants during the pre-election period, the Department of Health will not be able to be actively involved in the meetings until after the general election. NHS Employers is planning a number of events (summer 2017) to engage with employers on proposals for a reform of the current contract; these will inform a final position and a preferred approach to reform.

Paul also spoke about work between NHS Employers and the trade unions, looking into developing guidance for NHS organisations on apprentice pay. Policy board advised there is a need to get a balance in any guidance between providing a helpful national steer but not limiting the flexibility for local approaches. Further discussion on both these topics will take place at future policy board meetings.

NHS IMPROVEMENT'S WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

Ben Dyson spoke about the workforce issues that NHS Improvement is focusing on. These include: supporting staff retention; reducing agency spend; improving efficiency and developing new roles. Policy board members fed back to Ben the difficulties they are having in recruiting sufficient staff and the need to promote the NHS as a good place to work. They highlighted the need to increase the pace of service redesign and the importance of sufficient investment in continuing professional development for staff. The policy board also stressed the importance of NHS Improvement engaging with employers on the development of proposals which will impact on the workforce and that NHS Employers could provide a mechanism to enable them do this and also could support NHS Improvement's improvement work.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 20 July, 11-2pm, Horizon, Leeds