

## **Publication withdrawn**

This partnership was replaced on 7 July 2022 by the [Social Partnership Forum: partnership agreement 2022](#).

# Partnership Agreement

An agreement between

Department of Health, NHS Employers,

NHS Trade Unions, NHS England,

NHS Improvement and Health Education England



Department  
of Health

<b>Title: Social Partnership Forum - Partnership Agreement</b>
<b>Author: SER/Comms/CEB/13640</b>
<b>Document Purpose:</b> Transparency
<b>Publication date:</b> July 2016
<b>Target audience:</b> NHS England NHS Improvement NHS Trade Unions Health Education England including Local Education Training Boards HR Directors NHS Boards Regional Social Partnership Forums Local Social Partnership Forums Local Trade Union Representatives
<b>Contact details:</b> Department of Health Corporate Engagement Branch, Room 2N11 Quarry Hill Leeds LS2 7UE Email: spfmailbox@dh.gsi.gov.uk

You may re-use the text of this document (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/)

© Crown copyright

Published to gov.uk, in PDF format only.

[www.gov.uk/dh](http://www.gov.uk/dh)

## Foreword

I want the NHS to be the safest and most transparent healthcare system in the world by supporting staff to deliver compassionate care for patients seven days a week.

The Shared Delivery Plan and the NHS Five-Year Forward View set our immediate course but the transition to patient-centred care will dominate for the next 25 years.

To achieve this, the NHS needs a profound transformation in its culture. The NHS should be somewhere staff are able to safely challenge, learn and improve.

And it is not just about providing excellent healthcare; it is about caring for our patients as individuals, treating them with the dignity and respect they deserve and developing new care models, which provide the highest standards of service that they would recommend to their friends and family.

As I stated on my reappointment as Secretary of State, I am privileged to be working with our brilliant NHS workforce to make our NHS the safest healthcare system in the world.

Our work in places such as the national Social Partnership Forum demonstrates a shared commitment to meet our aspirations and challenges in a supportive and professional way.

I am delighted that NHS England, NHS Improvement and Health Education England have formally joined the Social Partnership Forum, confirming their commitment to the established principles in this Partnership Agreement, and I am personally pleased to support it.



**Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt**  
**Secretary of State for Health**

## Ministerial Social Partnership Forum (SPF) Chairman

I am delighted to chair the national Social Partnership Forum. The challenges faced by the NHS are tough, so the collective endeavour that the SPF embodies will be essential in helping to tackle them for the benefit of patients and staff alike.

Working with the SPF, my aim is to help the NHS provide the best care quality and the most efficient healthcare system in the world. Efficiency and quality are not competing interests: they are two sides of the same coin.

The best healthcare in the world is largely delivered by the most efficient systems because efficiency helps to drive even better services, as a greater share of the money is directed towards improved patient care.

There is strong evidence that engaged staff deliver better healthcare. NHS organisations with high levels of staff engagement (shown by the annual NHS Staff Survey) generally have lower levels of patient mortality, make more efficient use of resources and perform more strongly. They also tend to have higher patient satisfaction, with more patients reporting that they were treated with dignity and respect.

So the SPF's ongoing resolve and commitment to work collectively to support, for example, the recommendations set out in Sir Robert Francis's Inquiry report into Mid-Staffordshire Hospitals and his Freedom to Speak Up Review are greatly welcomed.

A recently-published independent stocktake report on SPF stated that it "remains one of the most advanced forms of industrial partnership in the British public sector".

We aim to build on that to help create a universal culture throughout the NHS where staff are supported and empowered to deliver high quality, patient-centred care and to create an environment where staff feel safe to speak up in line with the values enshrined in the NHS Constitution.

I look forward to an open and honest dialogue with SPF. I appreciate there will be differences at times but there is no better forum than SPF in which to address these issues together and to help ensure the NHS continues to be an excellent healthcare system for future generations.



**Ben Gummer MP**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Care Quality**

## Partnership Agreement

This Partnership Agreement sets out a framework agreed by the Department of Health, NHS Employers, NHS Trade Unions, NHS England, NHS Improvement and Health Education England, which describes the aims of the SPF, partners' shared values and principles for effective joint working.

It will be important in light of the Five Year Forward View and the focus on integration and devolution, that the SPF builds links with the wider care sector.

The processes and structures for effective joint working supporting this agreement can be found in the SPF Members' Handbook.

### Aims of the SPF

The national SPF and its subgroups are used to discuss, debate and involve partners in the strategic development and implementation of the workforce implications of policy.

A range of other organisations, groups and networks exist at a national and regional level with which the SPF liaises and interfaces through the national SPF, its subgroups and regional SPFs. This includes the Care Quality Commission and other organisations whose work impacts on the healthcare workforce. The SPF also works with the NHS Staff Council, which is responsible for formal negotiations on pay and terms and conditions issues for staff covered by Agenda for Change.

The SPF supports strong and effective partnership working at a local level with the overall aim of improving outcomes for patients and supporting staff to deliver high quality care. A growing body of academic evidence shows that the quality of staff engagement is a strong indicator of improved patient outcomes and experience and overall organisational performance.

### Shared Approach

This agreement reflects a strong commitment by partners to shared values and common purpose.

In particular partners:

- are committed to an NHS which provides a universal service paid for from taxation, with equal access for all and free at the point of use based on clinical need not ability to pay
- support an NHS which is accountable to Government, commissioners, regulators and the public and provides high quality care and integrated health services for patients and service users
- have a shared commitment to continuous improvement, including access to safe and high quality services and delivering value for money to the public

- believe the NHS should promote good practice in all areas of people management, including tackling bullying and harassment, promoting health and well-being, equality and diversity, learning and development
- share a commitment to the system as a whole working together to avoid redundancies in an effort to support job security for staff, to retain talent and skills within the service
- agree that the NHS should adopt a partnership approach to engage and support staff who may be involved in or affected by service changes at the earliest opportunity.

### Principles for Effective Joint Working

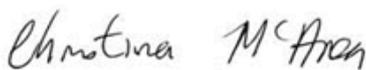
To deliver partnership working successfully it is important to have in place and continue to develop good formal and informal working relations that build trust and share responsibility, whilst respecting difference. These principles are underpinned by the NHS Constitution.

To facilitate this, all parties commit to adopt the following principles in their dealings with each other:

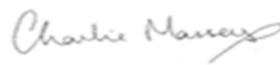
- build trust and a mutual respect for each other's roles and responsibilities
- openness, honesty and transparency in communications
- top level commitment, reinforced by senior level representation
- a positive and constructive approach based on shared goals and aspirations
- commitment to work with and learn from each other
- early discussion of emerging issues and maintaining dialogue on policy and priorities
- commitment to improving and ensuring high quality outcomes for patients and the public
- where appropriate, confidentiality and agreed external positions
- make the best use of resources
- ensure a no surprises culture.



**Ben Gummer**  
Parliamentary under  
Secretary of State for Care  
Quality and SPF Chairman



**Christina McAnea**  
NHS Staff Side Co-chair



**Charlie Massey**  
Dept of Health Co-chair



**Danny Mortimer**  
NHS Employer Side Co-chair



**Simon Stevens**  
NHS England



**Jim Mackey**  
NHS Improvement



**Ian Cumming**  
Health Education England