

Minutes (APPROVED)

NHS NATIONAL SERVICES SCOTLAND (NSS)

MINUTES OF STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 27th AUGUST 2020 HELD VIA TEAMS, COMMENCING 0930HRS

Present: Mr John Deffenbaugh, Non-Executive Director [Chair]
Mr Tam Hiddleston, UNISON
Mr Gerry McAteer, UNISON
Mr Mark McDavid, Non-Executive Director
Mr Keith Redpath, NSS Chair
Mr Ian Cant, Employee Director
Mrs Susan Cook, UNISON

In Attendance: Mrs Mairi Gaffney, Head of Healthy Working Lives
Mrs Jacqui Jones, Director of HR & Workforce Development
Mr Colin Sinclair, Chief Executive
Ms Aileen Stewart, Interim Associate Director of HR
Ms Karen Nicholls, Committee Secretary Observer

Apologies: Ms Suzanne Milliken, Union Representative

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1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mr Deffenbaugh welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies as above. Members were asked to declare any interests in the context of the agenda items to be considered. No interests were declared. Members noted that the meeting scheduled to take place on 5th May 2020 had been postponed as part of the streamlined governance approach to be used during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM NSS STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2020 [papers SG/20/12 & SG/20/13 refer]

2.1 Following a brief discussion Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2020 as a true and fair record.

2.2 Members noted that there was only one outstanding item from matters arising focused on staff take up of flu vaccination (Item 6.2). Mr Deffenbaugh commented that at an external organisation he was familiar with the Board had led the way on encouraging staff to take vaccinations. Members went on to discuss the COVID-19 response and Mr Redpath advised that the Cabinet Secretary had requested that all Boards worked to improve staff uptake figures. The targets had not been met in NSS and were usually well below the recommended 60% of staff taking part in the flu programme. Members noted that there may some increase in uptake due to worries over COVID-19, however, the fact that most staff were working remotely would be a challenge.

2.3 Mrs Jones advised that this had already been discussed at the Executive Management Team meeting and a detailed Flu Action Plan for NSS was to be presented at the next meeting, including targets, timelines and plans for physical

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Chair
Chief Executive

Keith Redpath
Colin Sinclair

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presence in facilities as near to staff as possible. Mr Hiddleston commented that the plans would need to be very detailed and would be discussed at the NSS Partnership Forum. NSS was also exploring peer vaccination to increase the opportunities for staff to take up the vaccine. It was noted that NHS Tayside had adopted an individualised approach by writing to every member of staff and this was being explored by senior staff in NSS. Mr Sinclair added that this would also be a topic for his all staff briefing taking place later that day.

- 2.4 Ms Gaffney provided reassurance to Members that NSS plans were well advanced with safety as the biggest priority and these were discussed in detail at Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Committee (OHSAC) including appropriate risk assessments due to COVID-19 along with a full communications plan. Members noted that this would also form the basis for any COVID-19 vaccination programme once it was available. Mrs Jones advised that in order to get a full picture of how many staff in NSS had been vaccinated for flu there would need to be a mechanism for staff to record when they had received this outwith work. It was this that accounted for some of the low uptake percentages historically as NSS was only able to report on this who were vaccinated in work. Mr McAteer urged caution on this point as some who were in at risk groups were not keen to share with their employers.
- 2.5 Members briefly discussed the implications of any mass vaccination plan in response to COVID-19.
- 2.6 Mr Redpath and Board Members would be keen to support any NSS communications plans to encourage as many staff as possible to take up the vaccination opportunity.

3. **PEOPLE REPORT [paper SGC/20/14 refers]**

- 3.1 Mrs Jones took Members through the report and highlighted the following:
- Staff welfare was paramount and new ways of working had been introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Continued pressure on HR staff due to the additional asks of the Test and Trace programme whilst trying to maintain BAU;
 - Improvement in sickness absence was welcome and further work was to be done to understand these figures;
 - Lots of work being done to improve figures for appraisals, pdp's and training – these were improving but had been affected during the pandemic response.
- 3.2 Mrs Jones continued that HR staff had done a tremendous job around the recruitment for the National Contact Tracing Centre in particular, as well as a staff bank with NHS Forth Valley. New ways of working had meant that all recruitment was being done in a virtual environment and was improving all the time. Some case management was still taking place, again in a virtual environment and social distancing.
- 3.3 Ms Stewart took Members through the rest of the report highlighting the following;
- News Ways of Working, including staff being redeployed to the COVID-19 response had been well received and the workforce response had been excellent and flexible to ensure priority services had been fully supported;
 - Staff and Trade Union colleagues had supported the continuation of case management where appropriate and this had been done virtually in most cases. However, where this was not appropriate suitable socially distanced venues had

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been found;

- The mini-survey to measure staff experience during the early days of the pandemic would shortly be released by Scottish Government was being fully prepared for to ensure as high a response rate as possible and ensuring all staff had the opportunity to take part. It was anticipated that the National Report would be available on 20th November. This would then be reviewed and the outcomes and analysis would be discussed at the Partnership Forum. This in turn would feed into the NSS Great Place to Work Action Plan. Trade Union colleagues would fully support this process.

3.4 Members then focused more on the new ways of working, including sickness absence and reporting on accidents when working from home. Mr Sinclair commented that in terms of the reduction in sickness absence it was important to establish whether this was due to people feeling that they should work as they were at home, or whether some of this reduction could be due to less stress due to not having to physically go into the office (i.e. commute, public transport, fatigue etc).

3.5 This now presented an opportunity to look more flexibly at how people work that would benefit both employees and the organisation. It was unlikely that any en-masse return to the office environment would be possible for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19, but this provided a real opportunity to look at what the future could possibly offer. Members also acknowledged that mental health issues during the lockdown must be taken into consideration as it may not be appropriate for all to work from home long-term. Mr McAteer and Mr Cant added that there had been no upsurge in staff contacting union representatives and this was generally a good marker of how staff morale was. However, this should be taken in the context that people may not wish to raise issues during a pandemic.

3.6 Mr Deffenbaugh thanked everyone for their input and summed up discussions as follows;

- Staff Experience – the impact of working in a totally different environment working from home;
- Sickness absence figures would be further reviewed and any lessons learned taken into account for future ways of working;
- Staff Survey to be carried out with final reporting due from Scottish Government in November.

3.7 Members asked that Mr Sinclair and Mrs Jones provide a brief update on lessons learned relating to staff during COVID to the next meeting. **Action: C Sinclair and J Jones to provide update to next meeting.** **C Sinclair/
J Jones**

4. NSS STAFF GOVERNANCE GREAT PLACE TO WORK ACTION PLAN YEAR 2 [paper SGC/20/15 refers]

4.1 Ms Stewart took Members through the report and advised that the plan had been completed on the basis of the results from the iMatter report for NSS from the previous year. Due to the governance changes in response to COVID-19 this had not been presented to the Committee in May. This report therefore had been updated and reflected that COVID-19 responses should be included. The final version would therefore be discussed further at the NSS Partnership forum and the report presented to Committee prior to that taking place. The National iMatter survey had been paused for this year and be replaced with a much shorter Pulse Survey as discussed earlier in the meeting.

4.2 Members noted that the emphasis for this year had been to continue with the key performance indicators (KPI's) already identified. This would allow local feedback and updates on experiences during the pandemic and take into account results

from the shortened survey. This would all then feed into an updated action plan.

4.3 Mr McAteer commented that the methodology and progress were going in the right direction but the current pandemic and emergency responses could undermine this which would affect results as it would be reporting on totally different experiences. Members discussed this in full and Mr Cant and Mr Sinclair were both optimistic for the future as all NSS staff had made a massive response to the pandemic to ensure all services continued. The biggest challenge going forward would be to ensure that given the changed working conditions staff remained safe, trained and in the principles of the Great Place to Work Plan. Mr McDavid reiterated that the NSS scores, when benchmarked to other organisations, were excellent. He added that he detected a lot of work being done to ensure NSS got the good results it deserved. Mr Redpath added that this was all reflected in how staff had stepped up during the pandemic. Mrs Jones agreed with these comments but added that staff were working in challenging situations and it was important to ensure that staff and managers were supported appropriately in this new environment.

4.4 Members thanked Mrs Jones and Ms Stewart for their informative update and noted the content of the paper in full.

5. NSS PARTNERSHIP FORUM UPDATE

5.1 Mr Sinclair and Mr Cant updated Members on the work of the NSS Partnership Forum during the six-month period since the last Committee meeting. Members noted that the Partnership Forum had become an emergency response and been held virtually. This was still the main focus of meetings and much of the discussions at the meetings mirrored what had already been discussed by Members at this meeting.

5.2 Members noted that in September the Partnership Forum would be focusing on the outcomes from the first round of Resource Allocation Meetings and the NSS strategy. In addition, discussions around the vaccination programmes and new ways of working would continue. In response to previous discussions the Partnership Forum had revisited their agenda and now looked at three main sections; Items for Discussion; Items relating to Performance and then Strategic Issues.

5.3 Members thanked Mr Sinclair and Mr Cant for their updates and looked forward to future reports.

6. NSS STAFF RISKS – RED AND AMBER [paper SGC/20/16 refers]

6.1 Ms Fewsdale took Members through the report and advised that HR had raised a new Amber risk in relation to any detrimental effect on staff health and wellbeing as a result of the pandemic and what mitigating actions could be put in place to manage this. Members noted the following action plan in relation to this risk:

- Additional training for staff and line managers;
- Access to counsellor and coaching support on HR Connect;
- Any further interventions implemented where required;
- Opportunities to return to an office and on what basis;
- Support to up-skill managers to manage staff remotely.

Members noted that other staff risks identified similar themes and in response to muscular skeletal issues of working from home would also feature and require DSE

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assessments to be done on this new environment. Ms Gaffney advised that 1500 had already been submitted for review.

6.2 Ms Stewart added that it was also important to remember that some staff had not had the ability to work from home and their circumstances also required careful monitoring.

6.3 Mr Deffenbaugh thanked Ms Fewsdale for her informative report and reiterated that the one factor, that was key to all the discussion so far, was around how staff were communicated with.

7. NSS STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

7.1 Members thanked all for compiling this report and welcomed the new format. All agreed that this was now ready to present to the NSS Board for information. Mr Redpath added that the format of this report should be shared with the other Board Committees and agreed to review this approach with Mrs Nicholls for other meetings. **Action: K Redpath and K Nicholls to review format of report with a view to share this with other Committees.**

**K Redpath
K Nicholls**

8. OTHER RELEVANT COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE ISSUES

8.1 Members noted the following;

- NSS Audit & Risk Committee had focused on the NSS Annual Report and Accounts;
- NSS Remuneration and Succession Planning Committee had reviewed the year end appraisals for executive staff and this had been another strong performance year;
- NSS Finance, Procurement and Performance Committee had focused on finances relating to the COVID-19 response and NSS financial position, as well as remobilisation plans.

9. ITEMS FOR THE BOARD COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

9.1 Mr Deffenbaugh made the following observations about the meeting:

- Assurance around the vaccination programmes looking at how to enhance the uptake of the Flu vaccine as a precursor to any COVID-19 programme;
- Assurance around staff experience and the work on the communications related to this;
- Work on going with line managers to ensure the right messages were getting across;
- Work on going with staff looking at the 'new' normal;
- Sickness absence figures were improving and work was underway to validate the figures so far;
- Request that for future meeting a lessons learned focus around COVID-19 around effective leadership and management of staff in a changed environment.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 10.1 Members agreed that the following should be removed from the standing items for this Committee as it was no longer relevant to normal business - Public Health Scotland update. Ms Stewart advised that she would also be working with Mrs Nicholls and Mr Deffenbaugh to look at the forward programme to ensure the most appropriate items were included.

11. REVIEW OF MEETING

- 11.1 Members made the following observations about the meeting:

- The TEAMs environment was becoming more familiar and easy to use for both Chair and participants;
- Excellent papers supplied for the meeting;
- Further clarity on the new report template was required.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 12.1 Thursday, 19th November 2020, 13.30 via TEAMs platform.