



Supporting the workforce

A joint statement from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the British Medical Association, NHS Confederation, NHS Providers, the Royal College of Nursing and UNISON

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The remarkable dedication and efforts of health and care staff throughout the COVID-19 crisis across all staff groups have been recognised by the public and by Government.

We are now moving into the next phase of managing the pandemic. As organisations which represent NHS staff and employers we consider that a public commitment to tackling the long-standing NHS and care workforce problems that were evident before and which the pandemic has re-enforced in a systematic and sustained manner is the way to repay the dedication of health and care staff. Without this, the service will not be able to meet the needs of its patients.

The NHS People Plan for England, devised with input from staff and employer organisations, provided a framework for solving our fundamental workforce issues. Understandably its publication has been delayed and may need to be reframed as well as ensuring it is directly relatable to the workforce. However, we must now move forward and begin to implement a new approach to our workforce.

The issues that need urgent implementation are:

- **Ensuring the wellbeing of the workforce.** With staff wearied and traumatised from coping with COVID-19 and now facing a huge backlog of work, this is particularly crucial. Active national support through a sustained and coordinated approach to mental health and wellbeing is essential for the recovery period if staff are to be retained and remain engaged
- **Flexible working arrangements and at work facilities.** We must realise the ambition to make the NHS a great place to work. Every NHS organisation needs to find practical ways of ensuring healthcare careers are attractive and rewarding for all their staff. Staff must be valued for their contribution through opportunities for flexible working, improved workplace facilities which promote health and wellbeing and third, reward and benefits
- **Increasing the supply of workforce.** Additional staff are required across the healthcare professions, with a nationally recognised priority in nursing, and measures to address this through increased recruitment to training, use of those volunteering to return, broader international recruitment (without doubt likely to be harder post-Covid) and a commitment to better retention practises
- **New ways of working and delivering care.** Tackling COVID-19 has shown that an array of innovative methods of delivering care and working are effective and can be activated quickly. The positive developments in this area must be captured and built on with time and support for training and development of multi-disciplinary working in and across primary / secondary / community care enabled through better technology



- **Leadership.** The Interim People Plan recognised the crucial importance of strong, diverse and compassionate leadership at all levels and how this is important for an inclusive, person-centred culture. During the past 3 months clinical leadership has gained traction as it has been permitted to deliver long needed change in the delivery of care. What this looks like and how it can be further implemented needs to be articulated and executed for long term benefit.

Emerging from this stage of the COVID-19 epidemic and managing its aftermath will present huge challenges to the NHS and wider care system, its staff and for Government, all of which will have to be addressed in time.

However, representing staff and employers we are united in believing that tackling these workforce issues is the best recognition of the hard work and dedication of NHS during the pandemic and also will be essential if the NHS is to deliver for its patients in the months and years ahead.