



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Interim People Plan – Branch Organiser’s briefing

What’s going on?

The [Interim NHS People Plan](#) was released on 3 June. It follows on from the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) (LTP). A “full, costed” version of the NHS People Plan will be published by the end of 2019, after the Spending Review and following a summer of engagement.

One of the themes of the People Plan is ‘Making the NHS the Best Place to Work’. As part of this theme, the NHS will be asking staff for input about what would make a difference to the experience of work. Some of this input will be done centrally, using online consultation, but it will also include activities run within NHS workplaces, starting this summer.

What are trying to achieve?

To put it simply, we want to stop people leaving the NHS for fixable reasons. By focussing on what would improve experiences of work, the NHS could flag up some of the common problems that cause people to leave jobs they love every day.

There is an expectation that employers will engage staff in workplace activities on making the NHS the Best Place to Work. The Social Partnership Forum is also keen to promote the benefits of doing these activities in partnership, involving unions locally.

We want to make sure that the priorities your Trust puts forward from conversations and activities in your Trust focus on real issues that staff care about and that you and your members have had input into this important conversation.

As the UK’s biggest trade union, we want to make sure the voice of the whole NHS team is heard. Because making the NHS the best place to work is not only good for you and your colleagues – but good for patients and their families too.

What are the opportunities?

This is an opportunity for the union get the voice of all staff groups heard by employers and the wider NHS system. It’s also a great chance to check in with members and non-members and show that UNISON cares about their views.

Getting involved in the conversations around the Best Place to Work could also help inform your branch organising framework planning for 2020 and can help us identify some themes and issues that are deeply and widely felt. Issues that are not always brought up in branch meetings or case work, but – importantly - issues that are winnable.

The first step is to get this discussed at your joint partnership forum to get a clear idea about what plans your employer has and how they will involve the union. Will they do this in partnership? How will you create an environment to encourage participation by all staff that is open, transparent and constructive? Will stewards get facility time to get around different shift times and hard to reach staff away from main sites?

What should I do before the engagement?

Strategic planning – Check with your employer about their plans and decide whether you are going to do the engagement together in partnership. If this is not possible then ask your employer to consider the following questions

- How will they engage hard to reach staff?
- What are the timescales for the engagement?
- How will staff be able to feed in their views?
- How will this be made inclusive?
- How will the views be prioritised?

Consider what things are happening across your region and what other branches are doing. This engagement can work alongside existing branch activity such as health and safety inspections or learning and recruitment events. It's all about talking to members which is why we have produced a postcard that you can order here

<https://shop.unison.site/product/make-your-voice-heard/>.

There are many ways to engage with staff and make this fun and inviting, such as holding events like lunch and learn, pop up events or cake (and fruit) stalls. Alternatively, you may want to get around your workplaces by floor walking or hold an online consultation. You may want to do this in partnership with your employer or run separate events. The final decision is with you.

In your planning, think about the benefits of getting involved and knowing what issues matter to our members. It is also important to consider the risks of not being involved. Whose views will be listened to if we don't participate? How will you describe what we are doing so that members know we are speaking up for them? How will we manage expectations about what will happen and the timescale?

Mapping – work out who you are going to speak to. How can we make sure we empower those who are sometimes neglected or side-lined, such as night workers, out-sourced staff and different parts of the whole NHS team?

Things to consider:

- Speaking to all occupational groups
- Getting around all workplaces within the organisation, including community staff
- Remembering people who work different types of shift
- Ensuring all bands have a voice (don't forget bands 2 – 4)
- Reaching as diverse range of people as possible

What kind of conversations should we have?

Help people having the conversations to feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible. Remember to ask whether the person is a member of the union and to recruit non-members.

You can ask a few questions to get the conversation going, a few examples are listed below. Remember to ask open questions and to clarify the issue.

For you

- *If you could change one thing about working here what would it be?*
- *What would make the biggest difference for you working here?*
- *What would the impact be if the issue was resolved?*

For your team

- *If you could identify one change that the trust could make that would improve your working life, what would it be?*
- *What change would make the biggest impact for all the people working in your team?*
- *If the trust made this change how would this positively affect patient care?*

For all the staff where you work

- *Could you identify one improvement that would make this a better place to work for everyone here?*
- *Is there something relatively small that the employer could do to make the environment better here?*
- *Is there anything that you have done in your team to make this a better place to work that could be shared more widely across the organisation or NHS?*

Use the postcard questions and collect them afterwards. Don't leave it with people, but you can fill it in with them, remembering to record where the person works so you can follow up on the issues. You may want to record issues using the member contact tool.

Use this opportunity to identify people who really care about issues and follow up to encourage them to get more involved – e.g. as a workplace contact, rep or member of a reference group.

You may be able to promote work the branch is already doing through campaigns or in partnership with the employer, but remember that you don't have to have all the answers! This exercise is about the union listening and reflecting what members care about to the employer.

What happens after the conversations?

The conversations will give you information and views to feed in to the employer and a way of supplementing or challenging themes put forward by the trust for resolution.

After your conversations:

- Check in with the employer to identify how they will assess feedback, prioritise issues for action at trust level and how will feed issues through for national/regional decisions
- Review the information reps have collected from members – identify settings or teams where there are common issues or themes.
- Start to collectively prioritise issues, thinking about how you can influence the employer’s priorities and how you can follow up through the branch. You may find some “quick wins” that you can do now. Or perhaps there are broader projects that you can organise around such as an Earnings Max project, a Car parking campaign or better access to healthy food and rest facilities.
- Identify those issues that are best shared with other groups such as health and safety, occupational health or professional groups.
- Evaluate how useful this exercise has been to branch recruitment and organising and consider how this can be fed into the regional health committee.

Organiser’s Checklist

- Raise at your Trust partnership forum and check your employer’s plans to engage with staff?**
- Will you do this in partnership with your employer?**
- Map and plan your activities**
- Order postcards and other materials**
- Speak to staff and recruit non-members**
- Decide how to feedback to the employer**
- Follow up on Earnings Max ideas**
- Follow up with the employer on common issues**