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**Addresses**

For action

NHS Chief Executives  
NHS Director of Human  
Resources; NHS  
Workforce Planning  
Leads; NHS Directors of  
Planning, Regional  
Workforce Planning  
Leads

For information

National Workforce  
Planning Group Members;  
National Workforce  
Planning Programme  
Board; COSLA; SSSC;  
SPDS

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Dear Colleagues,

**UPDATE ON REVISED WORKFORCE PLANNING GUIDANCE**

**Purpose**

1. This letter informs NHS Chief Executives, Directors of Human Resources, Workforce Planning Leads and other relevant stakeholders about changes to the publication timescales for local NHS Board Workforce Plans laid out in the Revised Workforce Planning Guidance published by the Scottish Government. These changes recognise the significant ongoing challenges faced by NHS Boards during the pandemic in modifying the current requirement to develop and deliver a 3 year Workforce Plan, while continuing to ensure practical, robust and effective workforce planning arrangements remain in place.

**Background**

2. As part of the first Integrated Health and Social Care Workforce Plan, published in December 2019, the Scottish Government's Health and Social Care Workforce Planning Unit issued revised guidance<sup>1</sup> for NHS Scotland Health Boards and Integration Authorities (IAs) on how workforce planning should be undertaken.

3. The purpose of the revised guidance was to support an approach to workforce planning which considered the needs of an integrated health and social care workforce, including the impact of third and independent sector care provision as part of an overall planning process.

4. In addition to the above, a key aim of the revised guidance was to co-ordinate operational service developments and financial planning processes with the workforce planning arrangements set out in the guidance. Workforce plans are intended to closely link to Annual Operational Plans (AOPs) submitted by Health Boards, providing Scottish Government with confirmation that NHS Boards and their partners' plans are in place and demonstrating how they would continue to deliver safe, high quality and accessible care. AOPs are required to be aligned to local Integration Authorities' strategic commissioning plans, and reflect ongoing work on service transformation and regional planning.

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<sup>1</sup> [Integrated Health and Social Care. Workforce Planning for Scotland: Guidance](#)

## **Covid-19 – Changes Required to the Development of Local Workforce Plans**

5. The Scottish Government recognises that the Covid-19 pandemic has radically altered the planning environment for health and social care services from that envisaged at the time of publication of the revised workforce planning guidance.

6. The pandemic will continue to influence the demand for, and deployment of, the health and care workforce for the foreseeable future. This will shape the way in which services are delivered over the longer term as the implications of Covid -19 for the workforce become more fully understood.

7. These circumstances create a series of potential challenges for local NHS Boards and Integration Authorities (IAs) in delivering the first of the 3 year workforce plans under the existing publication schedule. Recognising this, the Scottish Government has, in discussion with its key partners and stakeholders, decided to amend the submission timelines and process to better reflect the current circumstances and Covid-19 related priorities.

**8. As a result we are introducing a new submission timescale and are delaying publication of the first version of 3 year Workforce Plans, originally outlined in the revised workforce planning guidance published in December 2019.**

9. The rationale for this approach is that:

- A deferred publication date should provide additional time for NHS Boards/IAs to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, reflect arrangements for remobilisation of services and reconstitute local workforce planning groups, including stakeholders from primary care and the third and independent sectors;
- Having exited the Covid-19 pandemic period, NHS Boards/IAs should be able to fully reflect service remobilisation and redesign developments within their first 3 year plans, and this should improve the quality of their workforce plans;
- The new publication timescale should enable 3 year workforce plans to align with the next 3 year National Financial Planning cycle which is due to commence in April 2022; and
- The new timescale should also align with the current rolling 3 year Annual Operating Plan submission timescale

**NHS Chief Executives, Directors of Human Resources and Workforce Planning Leads should note the actions below:**

<b>Actions for Health Boards</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>NHS Boards are now requested to ensure that a 3 year Workforce Plan is developed no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</b></li><li>• <b>These plans should cover the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b></li><li>• <b>NHS Board Workforce Plans should be published on organisations' websites by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, and a link to each Plan should be forwarded to the Scottish Government's National Health and Social Care Workforce Planning Programme Office <a href="mailto:WFPPMO@gov.scot">WFPPMO@gov.scot</a> by this date.</b></li></ul>

## Interim Workforce Planning Arrangements

10. It is recognised that now, more than ever, workforce planning is a key part of the work underway across NHS Boards, Integration Authorities and other Primary Care and 3<sup>rd</sup> and Independent Sector organisations to address the challenges presented by Covid-19.

11. In the period prior to the new publication date for the first 3 year plan, it will still be necessary for organisations to provide workforce information which supports Scottish Ministers' decisions on health and social care services in understanding planned future models of care; assessing actual and likely supply and demand factors; and gauging and addressing the potential impacts of these factors on their continued efforts to recruit, train, deploy and retain a skilled and sustainable workforce.

12. The new arrangements set out in this letter should ensure that ongoing work:

- continues to deliver a clear picture of local level workforce planning activity;
- is capable of aggregation at regional and national levels; and
- allows fully informed responses to ongoing scrutiny requirements for Parliamentary and audit purposes.

13. In recognising the significant ongoing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic to stakeholders involved in workforce planning, a **Short Life Working Group - comprised of representatives from the Scottish Government, the National Workforce Planning Group, NHS Boards and wider stakeholders - will be established to develop a template workforce plan document to cover the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.**

14. The template workforce plan document will allow NHS Boards and IAs to produce consistent workforce planning documents that, while shorter and more concise than full 3 year workforce plans, are sufficient to meet the purposes set out in paragraph 12 outlined above.

15. The Short Life Working Group will convene in October 2020 and will issue a template workforce plan in December 2020 for completion and submission by Health Boards and IAs no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

16. The December 2019 guidance noted that a small number of Integration Authorities had already published 3 year workforce plans which did not directly align with the original publication timescale (i.e. publication of the first 3 year workforce plan in March 2021). In such cases, the guidance advised that the relevant HSCPs should maintain their existing workforce plan publication schedule.

17. The new publication date of March 2022 should remove this as an issue and in effect should mean that all HSCPs' workforce plan publication timescales now align. Clarification on the publication schedules for Integration Authority Workforce Plans is being sought via Chief Officers.

## Actions for NHS Boards

### Chief Executives, Directors of Human Resources and Workforce Planning Leads are requested to

- **Note the establishment of a Short Life Working Group and the associated timescales for development of a template Workforce Plan to cover the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

### Third and Independent Sector/Primary Care

18. While the new publication timescale for workforce plans directly affects Health Boards and Integration Authorities, there are strong interconnections between strategic commissioning, service procurement and workforce planning, as previous guidance has noted.

19. Third and Independent Sector social care service providers are typically commissioned, primarily by Local Authorities or IAs, to deliver a service for a fixed period of time. This process can make longer-term, proactive workforce development and planning difficult for Third and Independent care providers as employers.

20. To support longer term workforce planning, Third and Independent sector providers will need strategic commissioning and workforce plans to be clear about what kind of care and support will be required in order that they can plan and develop their workforce appropriately.

**21. NHS Boards and IAs should therefore ensure that representatives from Third and Independent Sector and primary care partners continue to be included as key stakeholders in the development of their workforce plans.**

### Future Actions

22. As well as the revised timelines and processes referred in this letter, we will also consider any further changes which may be required in future to reflect the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on other policy initiatives and commitments referenced in the December 2019 workforce planning guidance. These include:

- Introduction of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act;
- Development of the TURAS Data Intelligence Platform;
- Refinement of the NHS Board Workforce Projections process;
- National commitments to build further workforce planning capacity.

23. Any further revisions will also reflect work under discussion with service and financial planning colleagues to develop a whole-system approach to planning recognising the complex and ongoing interactions between three strands.

Yours sincerely,

**Sean Neill**

**Director for Health Workforce, Leadership and Service Reform**