



The NHS Interim People Plan

The recognition in the NHS Interim People Plan of the many difficult and challenging issues currently facing the NHS workforce is a welcome step in the right direction, the Association has said in response to the publication, but cautions that urgent action, including funding, is needed now to address workforce shortages and growing pressures on hard working health service staff if the ideas in this plan are to become reality.

The Association says, action must include a much stronger focus throughout the health service on the wellbeing of doctors and other healthcare staff, addressing concerns about fatigue, bullying and harassment and putting in place much more support locally and nationally for mental health of staff if the aspiration of making the NHS a great place to work is to be met. This is vital to delivering on the promise in the plan to provide staff with assurance of the support they can expect from the NHS as a modern employer

The Association reminds Minister that, as the plan acknowledges, there are significant staff shortages in many different parts of the workforce – anaesthesia is no exception to this with. As the plan notes, the workforce needs to grow into order to provide the level of care patients require so it is vital that these gaps are addressed. The Association points out evidence that working lives in the NHS are being negatively impacted – this is evident from the 2018 NHS Staff Survey where more people have reported bullying, harassment and abuse in their workplace in the last 12 months. Staffing pressures are causing stress and burnout as shown in the recent Health Education England report on NHS staff and learner wellbeing, which sets out some of the most serious causes of harm to mental health and wellbeing.

We know from our own membership that bullying and harassment is a problem in the NHS and it is good to see the plan acknowledge the impact this can have on staff's wellbeing. The Association continues to work on initiatives to address the issue of bullying - including our own #knockitout campaign and alongside other members of the multidisciplinary anti-bullying alliance (https://anaesthetists.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Wellbeing/anti_bullying_alliance_document_may_2019.pdf?ver=2019-05-21-110328-243). In addition, the commitment in the plan to develop a new offer to NHS employees is a positive one. The wellbeing of our members has long been a focus of the Association and addressing issues such as burnout (<https://anaesthetists.org/Home/Membership/Trainees/SWeAT-statement-Stress-burnout-depression-and-work-satisfaction-among-UK-anaesthetic-trainees>) and mental health play a key part in that.

We note the inclusion in the plan of the roll out of medical credentialing which could enable a more flexible way of working. However, as our Trainee Committee noted in their recent response to the GMC consultation on this issue (https://anaesthetists.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Responses%20to%20consultations/Response_to_consultation_Association_response_GMC_Credential_Consultation_January_2019.pdf?ver=2019-03-11-183705-913) it is vital that the introduction of the system is monitored to make sure a two-tier system of qualifications does not develop. We will communicate our views to the GMC, the Royal Colleges and the devolved administrations and strive to see these concerns are addressed in the plans for medical credentialing



Association of Anaesthetists

The recognition in the plan of the need to do more to value speciality and associate specialist (SAS) doctors is a welcome one. SAS doctors deliver an important role in the anaesthesia workforce as well as in the Association where we have an active SAS committee.

We look forward to seeing the finalised plan, along with further details on how each of the actions will be implemented, later in the year.