

BNSSG Integrated Care Board (ICB) People Committee Meeting

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 28th August 2025 at 14:00 – 16:00, via Microsoft Teams.

Minutes

Present		
Jaya Chakrabarti	Non-Executive Member – People (Chair) BNSSG ICB	JC
Alison Moon	Non-Executive Member – Primary Care Committee, BNSSG ICB	AM
Dave Jarrett	Chief Delivery Officer, BNSSG ICB	DJ
Ellen Donovan	Non-Executive Member – Quality and Performance, BNSSG ICB	ED
Jeff Farrar	Chair of the BNSSG ICB	JF
Jo Hicks	Chief People Officer, BNSSG ICB	JH
Jo Medhurst	Chief Medical Officer, BNSSG ICB	JM
In attendance		
Astra Brayton	Internal Communications Manager, BNSSG ICB	AB
Cath Lewton	Exec PA to CPO and People Support Officer (note taker), BNSSG ICB	CL
Padma Ramanan	Head of Finance – Acute and Mental Health (Co Chair Staff Partnership Forum) BNSSG ICB	PR
Raj Uppal	People Manager, CSU	RU
Sam Hill	Senior People Business Partner, BNSSG ICB	SH
Apologies		
Aishah Farooq	Associate Non-Executive Member for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire	AF
Deborah El-Sayed	Chief Transformation and Digital Officer, BNSSG ICB	DES
Lara Reading	People Business Partner, CSU	LR
Rosi Shepherd	Chief Nursing Officer, BNSSG ICB	RS
Shane Devlin	Chief Executive Officer, BNSSG ICB	SD

	Item	Action
01	Welcome and Apologies The above apologies were noted.	
1.1	Declaration of Interest No new declarations were made.	
02	Minutes of last meeting Minutes from the last meeting on 10th June 2025 were recorded as an accurate record.	
03	Action Log There were no open actions to review.	
04	Staff Survey update presented by Jo Hicks and Astra Brayton <p>JH explained that, due to significant organisational change, the ICB will not participate in the national NHS staff survey this year. The main reason is that the organisational development plan, which was based on previous survey results, could not be delivered this year because of the change process. Instead, the focus has been on supporting staff through the transition.</p> <p>This decision aligns with all ICBs across the Southwest region, who are also opting out of the national survey in favour of local approaches.</p> <p>The ICB will conduct a series of localised pulse surveys, led by the communications team. The first pulse survey will take place in the autumn and will focus on the current context, staff well-being, and issues relevant to the ongoing change.</p> <p>These pulse surveys are intended to be more tailored and responsive than the national survey, allowing the organisation to gather actionable feedback and adapt questions as the transition progresses.</p> <p>Some intelligence from these pulse surveys may still be fed into the national response, but only where relevant.</p>	

	Item	Action
	<p>AM supported the approach and emphasised the importance of carefully designing the pulse survey questions to address both current and future organisational needs. She queried the possibility of including questions that lay the groundwork for the new organisation. JH responded that the first pulse survey will be retrospective and focus on the present, with future surveys (over the next 6–9 months) addressing forward-looking issues as the organisation moves through the transition.</p> <p>JM raised concerns about the timing and emotional impact of the surveys, noting that up to half the staff may be affected by the change and could provide emotionally driven responses. She highlighted the need for careful question design and referenced the Bridges transition model, which addresses staff reactions to change and the importance of supporting both those leaving and those staying. JH acknowledged these concerns, stating that staff groups may need to be separated for some engagement, and that the organisational change and well-being groups will be consulted to ensure questions are appropriate and do not cause harm.</p> <p>JC suggested ensuring that questions are actionable and reflect staff priorities, and that staff have opportunities to communicate specific concerns.</p> <p>JF asked about alignment with Gloucestershire ICB, emphasising the need for a joined-up approach to staff engagement. JH confirmed that the same approach is being taken in Gloucestershire, and communications teams are coordinating to ensure consistency.</p> <p>The committee supported the decision to pause participation in the national staff survey and proceed with a series of local pulse surveys, with careful attention to question design, timing, and staff well-being. The approach will be regularly reviewed and adapted as the organisational change progresses.</p>	
05	<p>Update from the Inclusion Council (17th July) presented by Sam Hill and Jo Hicks</p> <p>SH reported that the Inclusion Council's recent meeting focused heavily on the impact of organisational change, including culturally appropriate therapeutic support for staff and updated reasonable adjustment guidance, particularly for those affected by change.</p> <p>The Disabled Staff Network has introduced additional peer support sessions.</p> <p>The council discussed improving inclusive recruitment, especially for competitive interview processes during organisational change. This</p>	

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	<p>includes developing Equality and Diversity Representative (EDR) training and linked guidance for hiring managers. Drafts have been circulated for review by the Inclusion Council and Staff Partnership Forum. The guidance and EDR training are being developed in partnership with Gloucestershire ICB to ensure consistency across both organisations.</p> <p>A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to reviewing Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) and Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) data. The council noted ongoing challenges, particularly in recruitment data for race equality.</p> <p>Calais Hutchins, ICS Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager for BNSSG ICB conducted a deeper analysis, revealing that black applicants are 48 times less likely to be appointed than white applicants when considering the entire recruitment process from application to appointment. This disparity is even greater than previously understood, as earlier data only considered shortlisting to appointment.</p> <p>JM called for urgent action, reflecting on whether the leadership group had been too complacent in the past.</p> <p>The committee agreed that this issue must remain a top priority, especially during organisational change, to avoid further exacerbating inequalities.</p> <p>JF asked about Tracy Joliffe's involvement and system-level EDI leadership. He confirmed Tracy's participation in the chief executive selection panel and Transition Committee. He also raised the need for clarity on the ICB's role versus the wider system in EDI work.</p> <p>SH clarified that the data discussed is for the ICB as an employer, not the wider system, and that internal focus must remain strong regardless of system-level arrangements.</p> <p>JF emphasised that racial equality must be a standing agenda item for the Transition Committee, given the risk of disproportionate impact on BME staff during change.</p> <p>SH outlined ongoing and planned actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand EDR training, making it mandatory for all interview panel members. • Implement robust anti-racism training for senior leaders and embed it in organisational change processes. • Review and adapt recruitment processes, including application forms, to reduce barriers for underrepresented groups. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and report on progress, with the full WRES/WDES report to be brought to the committee and board. <p>JH noted that the organisation is not currently representative of the local population, and statistics may worsen during the merger unless positive action is taken.</p> <p>AM asked about governance and accountability for inclusion. JH described recent expansion of the Inclusion Council to include directorate representatives and confirmed shared executive responsibility, but acknowledged more visible leadership is needed.</p> <p>JM stressed the need for intentional action, white allyship, and moving beyond structural to individual anti-racism work, referencing experience from the London system.</p> <p>JC highlighted the importance of safe spaces for discussion, especially given the national context and media coverage, and the need for vigilance during transition.</p> <p>The committee agreed that racial equality and inclusive recruitment must remain high priorities and be embedded in all transition processes. The Inclusion Council's work and the forthcoming WRES/WDES report will be closely monitored.</p>	
06	<p>Update from the Staff Partnership Forum (SPF) (5th August) presented by Padma Ramanan</p> <p>PR gave an overview of the last SPF meeting held on 5th August. Highlights of the meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR reported that the union recognition agreement is in its final stages, having been developed in collaboration with unions and aligned with Gloucestershire ICB practices. Feedback from all relevant unions has been incorporated, and the agreement now includes clearer language on the recognition of other unions. SPF reviewed the organisational change policy, highlighting key changes such as ring-fencing and protection for staff on leave. The policy has been aligned with Gloucestershire's approach and is ready for sign-off. Proposed changes to the pay protection policy were discussed. Long-term protection will increase to two years for staff with less than two years' service and three years for those with more than three years. Short-term protection will be reduced to 12 months. LR provided an update to SPF on job matching guidance, including the 66% match threshold and detailed criteria for 	

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	<p>matching staff to new roles. This guidance will be shared in a future paper for further discussion as the process continues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The forum was informed of the decision not to participate in the NHS staff survey for 2025 due to ongoing organisational changes. The forum supported this decision and noted that internal pulse surveys will be conducted to gather real-time staff feedback. SH is developing competitive interview guidance, which will be shared with SPF and Inclusion Council. Key areas include interview support and inclusive recruitment. Work is underway to develop a DPIA to facilitate the sharing of personal information between BNSSG and Gloucestershire ICBs. <p>AM asked if SPF needs additional support during the extended period of organisational change, PR stated that the forum currently feels supported and well-informed. However, as the process lengthens, the forum will monitor the situation and adjust its approach as needed.</p> <p>The SPF is actively engaged in aligning policies, supporting staff through change, and ensuring effective communication and union involvement. The forum will continue to adapt its work as the organisational change process evolves.</p>	
07	<p>Workforce KPI Metrics (Quarter 1) presented by Raj Uppal</p> <p>RU presented workforce metrics (Quarter 1) and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headcount decreased by 2 from the previous quarter, ending at 475. There were 10 starters and 10 leavers in Q1, compared to 21 starters and 14 leavers in Q4. The 12-month rolling turnover rate slightly decreased to 12.18%, and when excluding fixed-term contracts, it was 9.38%. Most leavers (80%) resigned voluntarily, with retirement being the most common reason (40%), followed by end of fixed-term contracts (20%). Recruitment activity was lower in Q1 than Q4. Of the 10 new starters, half were on fixed-term contracts and half were permanent, mainly in the nursing directorate. Previous recruitment peaks were linked to the end of the "Shaping Our Future" programme and subsequent release of roles. The rolling 12-month absence rate was 3.21%, down from 3.59% in Q4. Q1 ended with a 2.87% absence rate, below the 	

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	<p>ICB target of 3%. Anxiety, stress, and depression were the most cited reasons for absence (22 staff in Q1). There were 6 live long-term sickness cases, with 1 expected to return soon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance increased by 3% to 88.5% across 16 modules. Training compliance is monitored by directorate, and areas of low compliance are targeted for improvement. The workforce is 76% female and 24% male, with 40% of females working part-time. The majority of staff are aged 31–55 (76%), with 9.3% aged 30 or under. Only 12.2% of staff identify as non-white, which is below the local population average, and there is underrepresentation of BME staff at senior bands (8B and above), though data accuracy is being reviewed. Staff declaring a disability is 9.3%, also below the local average of 16.9%. The response rate for exit questionnaires was 30% in Q1 (3 out of 10 leavers), and 33% over the past year. Leavers generally agreed that flexible working and well-being were supported but cited lack of progression and promotion opportunities as a weaker area. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is being increasingly used, and additional support mechanisms such as HR drop-ins, "Time to Talk" teams, and well-being groups are in place, especially during organisational change. <p>Some discrepancies were noted in ethnicity data reporting at senior bands, prompting a review of how data is recorded in ESR.</p> <p>The committee requested future reports to include statistical process control charts to better identify trends and outliers, and to consider including a gender-neutral/undeclared category in gender reporting. AM asked if there were any risks which committee needed to know about which either put individuals or the organisation at risk when analysing below average level data. JH and SH confirmed that granular data is monitored and that red flags would be escalated to the committee if needed. Training compliance is tracked by directorate, and support mechanisms are regularly reviewed and adapted.</p> <p>JH acknowledged that while shared responsibility for inclusion exists at executive level, there is more to do to make this visible and actionable throughout the organisation.</p>	

	Item	Action
	<p>Action: Future reports to include statistical process control charts to better identify trends and outliers, and to consider including a gender-neutral/undeclared category in gender reporting.</p> <p>Action: The HR team will work with Gloucestershire colleagues to align and enhance future workforce reporting, including trend analysis and improved data granularity.</p>	<p>RU/LR</p> <p>JH</p>
08	<p>Organisational Change update presented by Jo Hicks</p> <p>JH explained that there is no formal announcement yet regarding the chair role, which is delaying the announcement of the chief executive and further progress on organisational change.</p> <p>Significant HR work is ongoing in preparation, including daily collaboration with Gloucestershire colleagues to ensure alignment in staff support, policy, and data management.</p> <p>Both HR teams are updating ESR data, clarifying staff service dates, and preparing for potential redundancy calculations to ensure readiness when consultation begins.</p> <p>HR drop-in sessions continue for all staff and line managers, providing a forum to clarify information and address concerns. These sessions are scheduled to continue throughout the extended change period. Information is available on the staff hub, but drop-ins help translate technical HR language into practical guidance for staff.</p> <p>JF reported that the announcement of the chair is expected soon, which will allow the appointment of the chief executive and enable more direct engagement with both organisations.</p> <p>A Transition Committee will be established from 10th September, regardless of chair appointment timing. This committee will address vision, structures, processes, and governance, aiming to avoid duplicate conversations and ensure both boards are aligned. He emphasised the need for the Transition Committee to have the trust and responsibility of both boards to avoid delays and confusion.</p> <p>JF described the management of change at the national level as poor, with decisions and authorisations delayed, leaving staff in a prolonged state of uncertainty. Both JH and JF agreed that as soon as appointments are confirmed, they will coordinate closely to support staff and communicate the next steps.</p>	

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	<p>JF plans to convene a joint session with both boards and the new chief executive as soon as appointments are confirmed, to set out the vision.</p> <p>JH clarified that the voluntary exit scheme is awaiting Treasury approval at the national level, with all 42 ICB submissions pending. The local team is ready to proceed once authorisation is received. The sequence of steps is chair appointment, chief executive appointment, executive appointment, and non-executive appointments, then voluntary redundancy, followed by compulsory redundancy.</p> <p>Compulsory redundancy consultation for the majority of staff is now expected to take place in the first quarter of the next financial year, meaning the process will extend into 2026.</p>	
08	<p>Policies:</p> <p>Pay Protection Policy presented by Sam Hill SH explained that the policy was amended to align with Gloucestershire ICB. Long-term pay protection is now two years for staff with up to two years' service and three years for those with more than three years. Short-term protection (e.g., for on-call payments) is reduced to 12 months. This change was reviewed and supported by the Staff Partnership Forum.</p> <p>Organisational Change Policy presented by Sam Hill SH noted the Key changes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending priority status for pregnant employees and those returning from maternity, adoption, or shared parental leave to 18 months, in line with legal requirements. • Ring-fencing classification was adjusted to allow staff to be ring-fenced in their current band, one band above, or one band below, to address differences in banding between the two organisations. • Staff are not permitted to amend job descriptions or request re-banding during the change period but can submit addendums (with organisational sign-off) if their current job description does not reflect their full role. 	

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	<p>Domestic Abuse Policy presented by Raj Uppal</p> <p>RU explained this is a new policy, developed by the safeguarding team with HR input, recognising that staff may be affected by domestic abuse as victims, survivors, or perpetrators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy defines types of abuse, outlines roles and responsibilities, and provides guidance for line managers on recognising and responding to signs of abuse. • A toolkit is being developed for signposting to external agencies and internal support. The policy also addresses actions if a perpetrator is identified among staff, including possible disciplinary action. • The policy will be launched after committee approval, and benchmarking with other ICBs is planned. <p>AM commented that it was strange this was a new policy and why one was not in place before. RU clarified that this is indeed a new policy for the ICB, prompted by a safeguarding case and that there was no previous policy specifically addressing domestic abuse. JH noted that while there was no official policy before, the organisation had dealt with domestic abuse issues through other support mechanisms such as Freedom to Speak Up and line manager interventions. The new policy formalises and strengthens the response.</p> <p>The ICB People Committee supported the Pay Protection policy, Organisational Policy and Domestic Abuse policy.</p>	
09	<p>Union Recognition Agreement – presented by Sam Hill</p> <p>SH explained that the ICB is formalising union recognition for the first time, having previously only invited unions to the Staff Partnership Forum without formal recognition. This change was prompted by a request from the Southwest Regional Staff Partnership Forum and increased staff interest following the recent organisational change announcement.</p> <p>The agreement uses the national template and is aligned with Gloucestershire ICB's existing union recognition practices.</p>	

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	<p>The process involved engagement with the Staff Partnership Forum and direct consultation with recognised unions, who reviewed and provided feedback on the draft agreement.</p> <p>The agreement is now ready for final sign-off, after which the ICB will be formally union recognised, providing external support and representation for staff during the transition and future organisational changes.</p> <p>The ICB People Committee supported the Union Recognition Agreement.</p>	
11	<p>Hot topics/Risks/ Matters for Escalation or Communication</p> <p>No additional risks or matters for escalation were raised beyond those already discussed, with the committee agreeing that inclusive recruitment and the impact of organisational change remain top priorities for risk management and escalation.</p>	
12	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None were raised.</p>	
	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>23rd October 2025</p>	

Cath Lewton with the assistance of Copilot
Executive PA to CPO and People Support Officer
August 2025