

London People Board – Minutes
Wednesday 19th November 2025

Welcome and apologies

The chair Nnenna Osuji (NO) welcomed board members to the meeting.

Review minutes from London People Board held on 13th September 2025

Minutes approved.

National Updates

Presentation

Medium term planning guidance

Dame Marie Gabriel (MG) provided an overview of the three-year planning guidance:

- Workforce requirements feature briefly, with a strong operational focus on job planning, reducing sickness absence, reducing agency spend and mandatory training implementation.
- There is limited reference to transformation or left shift, despite these being central to the Ten Year Health Plan.
- Shrinking workforce teams across ICBs and providers risk being pulled almost entirely into operational delivery to meet immediate pressures.

The board expressed concern that workforce activity could become purely transactional for the next three years and agreed the London People Board must ensure strategic workforce issues remain visible despite national pressures.

Nichole McIntosh (NM) noted that poor staff morale, uncertainty, and anxiety linked to organisational change make operational expectations harder to deliver. She described the introduction of health and wellbeing champions within Workforce, Training and Education and highlighted the importance of safe spaces for staff to speak openly during difficult transitions.

The board agreed the need for clarity on what is best done regionally v system and provider level, particularly given reduced resource.

Strategic Commissioning Framework

Members discussed implications for the London People Board's role as a regional strategic body. Points included:

- London's distinct demographics and labour market require a **London voice upwards** to shape national policy and implementation.
- The Board should operate primarily as a **linking, coordinating, and commissioning group** rather than a direct delivery group.
- Transition is the "missing middle" between long term strategy and immediate operational delivery. The Board could play a critical role in surfacing, testing, and scaling innovations that enable the three shifts.

MG noted practical examples of left shift already being delivered in neighbourhood settings, such as integrated urgent response teams in Tower Hamlets, where the return on investment may be clear locally but less visible across the system.

Members agreed the Board should:

- Champion neighbourhood and primary care workforce innovation
- Strengthen wrap around support for care workers and social care colleagues
- Maintain strong representation from across sectors including GLA and Skills for Care
- Support integration of health, employment and housing investment
- Coordinate programmes such as **Workforce Integration Network** and maternal health initiatives

National Antisemitism & Antiracism letter

MG drew attention to the national focus on tackling racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism. This includes:

- Strengthened mandatory training requirements
- Workforce standards that ensure staff safety and protection
- Expectation that the workforce reflects local communities
- New obligations to publish data on equity and socio-economic inclusion

Members agree that London has a diverse workforce and population so must lead in this area. National directives need local application that does not increase administrative burden on staff already under strain

Development of new Long Term Workforce Plan

MG set out the national ambitions emerging from the new Ten Year Workforce Plan, expected in spring. Early signals include:

- A shift from counting staff to designing skills, roles and deployment that enable reform
- A focus on sustainability, motivated workforce and new models of care
- Delivery detail for years 1 to 3 with longer term ambitions to year 10
- Clarity that workforce reform must follow service reform, not maintain the status quo

There is a risk that London systems lack the resource to deliver reform without targeted regional coordination
Retention must be a central theme due to anxiety and uncertainty in the workforce

London People Board look back and look ahead

NO led a reflection on the achievements of the London People Board and invited members to consider how this should inform future priorities.

MG noted that the look back exercise was intended to consolidate progress made across the last five years and provide a basis for future planning in the current national and regional context. MG noted that the discussion would support the development of a refreshed proposition and work plan.

Reflections on LPB achievements

Members offered individual reflections on the areas they were most proud of. These were captured as follows.

Mark Watson (MW) Noted the success of the temporary staffing scheme and the group that is led by Joe Barrow.

Nichole (NM) reflected that she was proud of the Board's leadership on inclusion, its ambition to shift language from deficit to asset, and its role in modelling good practice. She highlighted the impact of the recent showcase event and the visible support for equity and diversity from senior leaders.

The board highlighted their role in creating a joined approach across London and in sustaining collaborative leadership during a period of significant operational pressure. And the Board's contribution to embedding inclusive practice and maintaining a strong workforce voice in strategic decisions.

NO noted pride in the Board's commitment to raising workforce issues that were often overlooked nationally and in giving visibility to the experience of staff in London. She valued the Board's role in surfacing complex issues and convening partners to develop solutions that had meaningful impact.

The Board has retained focus on the needs of the workforce during prolonged industrial action, significant operational challenge and repeated national resets. Emphasised the value of the Board's credibility as a collective voice for London.

Laura Leadsford (LL) noted her pride in the Board's ability to connect local innovation with regional delivery. She spoke about the influence of site visits, including to Tower Hamlets, in identifying practice that could be scaled to benefit staff across London.

Members reflected on the Board's role in amplifying grassroots examples of improvement and in drawing attention to staff experience; emphasising the importance of continuing to strengthen the Board's feedback loops with frontline staff.

Future direction and Board steer

- MG suggested that the reflections should be consolidated into a visible document that sets out LPB achievements, demonstrates impact to date and frames the strategic priorities for the next planning period.
- NO agreed and emphasised the need for clarity about future priorities in the changing national and regional landscape.
- MG confirmed that the existing look back report would be enhanced and shared publicly to demonstrate the collective offer and achievements of the LPB. This would then be used to inform a structured forward plan.
- Members agreed that the Board should continue to model regional leadership on inclusion, workforce planning, integration and staff voice.

Actions

- **CC** to support preparation of the document for circulation once completed.

London Refugee Employment Partnership working group for health and care

Presentation

Stephen Waring (SW) updated the Board on progress of the London wide Refugee Employment Partnership. He noted that the programme originated from national discussions led by Dr Masoud Faladi, and aims to create a practical route for refugees to enter NHS employment, including clinical roles.

- A senior meeting with the Department for Work and Pensions is scheduled to discuss the broader economic case.
- A number of refugees with clinical backgrounds remain underemployed despite London's workforce shortages.
- Funding for Medical Support Worker roles, previously centralised, has ceased which has slowed progress.
- Lizzie Smith (LS) is convening a new working group to drive delivery, scaling and consistency. The first meeting is planned for December.
- A further cross sector summit, chaired by Caroline Clarke and Tom Coffey (GLA), will be held within six to nine months to maintain momentum.

SW asked the Board to endorse the programme and provide ideas for bringing all London ICBs into the partnership, noting that most activity to date has been concentrated in North West London through the work of Anthony Sinbadia.

Discussion

Board members strongly endorsed the programme and highlighted the following points:

- **Scaling across London-** Members from North Central and South West London noted active work underway regionally to reduce barriers to entry for all underrepresented groups, with refugees included in this approach. They emphasised the importance of consistent London wide action rather than relying on individual champions.
- **Barriers to employment**
The Board discussed:
 - persistent insistence on prior NHS experience in job descriptions
 - limited recognition of overseas clinical experience
 - the need for inclusive recruitment and management training
 - issues arising when operational teams revert to old processes once initial momentum fades

LS and colleagues from WTE highlighted ongoing work with providers and NHS Employers to challenge unnecessary recruitment barriers.

- **Volunteering as a route into employment** Members cited work at King's College Hospital where asylum seekers have taken up volunteering roles, which has successfully translated into employment once they receive refugee status.
- **Linking with wider programmes**
- **Role of ICBs** Members noted that four of London's five ICBs are already engaged in refugees and asylum

seeker support programmes. The Board agreed the approach should be London wide, with shared learning from North West London's experience and stronger alignment with Chief People Officer networks to remove local barriers.

- **Workforce modelling** Members queried the modelling underpinning refugee workforce assumptions, particularly estimates such as "300 nurses". There was agreement that clearer data and more robust modelling should underpin future planning.
- **Importance of explicit focus**
Several members emphasised the importance of retaining a dedicated workstream on refugees in order to keep the agenda visible, given the current national political context and the risk of deprioritisation.

Actions

LS to provide the Board with the modelling assumptions used for initial refugee workforce estimates when available.

SW to circulate the link to the refugee employment app or development prototype to Board members.

London People Board Equality, Diversity Inclusion Letter

NO reflected on staff safety concerns following recent antisemitic incidents and broader community tensions. The board noted the need for tangible support mechanisms for staff, including practical tools such as personal alarm systems, and suggested the Board explore how London organisations could equip staff who feel unsafe when travelling to and from work. Emphasised the variation in approaches across Trusts and the importance of consolidating best practice into a London wide position.

Discussion

Members welcomed the focus on staff safety and raised two related national workstreams that the Board should align with the **Lord Mann review** on antisemitism guidance, led by DHSC and national work on **uniform policy and political neutrality**, led by the Chief Nursing Officer's office

Karen Bonner (KB) confirmed she would take forward the violence and aggression workstream previously initiated under her predecessor. She reported:

- active discussions with the Mayor's Office regarding joint approaches on staff safety
- a national EDI report examining the impact of recent civil unrest on NHS staff
- exploration underway on whether elements of the **EPRR framework** could be adapted to support staff during protests, marches and politically sensitive incidents, including buddying arrangements and safe travel considerations

KB agreed to review variation in local practice and begin shaping a Once for London best practice model.

NO noted that the London EDI Steering Group had already convened a roundtable with EPRR colleagues and that learning from this exercise should be consolidated. Members agreed there was merit in bringing together:

- outputs from the EDI roundtable
- the national work on riots and political tension
- the Mayor's Office collaboration
- the updated violence and aggression approach
- the emerging toolkit on zero tolerance versus compassionate responses

The Board reiterated that the current environment requires clear, unified guidance for Trusts, particularly concerning antisemitism, racism and staff protection.

Actions

KB to lead development of a London wide best practice toolkit on staff safety, bringing together violence and aggression work, EPRR learning, and relevant national guidance.

KB to map variation in Trust approaches to antisemitism, racism and staff safety, and identify examples of effective practice.

London EDI Steering Group to produce a consolidated report for the next London People Board, incorporating learning from the EPRR roundtable, national reports and mayoral initiatives.

Sub Committee Updates

EDI Sub Committee

NO highlighted the recent London wide EDI showcase event and noted that while the report captured the showcase element well, it did not reflect the full depth of the wider EDI programme. highlighted three main benefits of the event.

- strengthened the Board's aim of showcasing good practice across London.
- It created space to surface and amplify grassroots innovation, linking to recent site visits such as Tower Hamlets.
- It offered a timely moment for staff and leaders to come together given the wider context affecting the workforce.

Caroline Clarke had opened the event and reiterated senior sponsorship for meaningful inclusion work across the region.

- Development of London guidance for responding to riots and civil disorder in partnership with EPRR teams.
- Work to support a transition of some deliverables as system workforce capacity reduces and neighbourhood models mature.
- Early activity linked to the transition to the new ESR provider, including influencing future ethnicity categorisation to better reflect census level detail and avoid broad homogenised groupings.

The board welcomed the emphasis on staff safety and identity, noting the limitations of current workforce systems and the need to support staff who feel exposed or under threat in the current climate.

Digital sub committee

The sub committee has strengthened its role in driving digital capability across London, with an expanded membership and a developing draft workplan. Key priorities remain digital leadership, digital literacy, and strengthening education through a Once for London approach.

- Membership widened to include more providers, reflecting the importance of digital capability across services.
- Draft workplan under development and being refined through wider engagement.
- Focus on digital leadership, digital skills, digital literacy and digitising learning for clinical and non clinical staff.
- Continued emphasis on aligning regional work with national AI and data developments.

Recent activity

- Engagement with the Federated Data Platform team.
- Early discussions on an AI bootcamp offer with Imperial College and UCLH.
- Conversations with the Health Innovation Networks on AI, workforce readiness and skills.
- Initial dialogue with the Greater London Authority on digital skills across the NHS workforce.
- Next meeting with system and provider leaders scheduled for early November.

Next steps

- Update the terms of reference to reflect an expanded remit.
- Finalise the draft workplan.
- Progress joint work with Health Innovation Networks.
- Board asked to consider how it can champion and promote digital leadership across London

Close