



*Improving Working Lives Standard*

NHS employers committed to improving the working  
lives of people who work in the NHS

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# *Improving Working Lives in the NHS*

## *Improving Working Lives Standard*

NHS employers committed to improving working lives:

- Recognises that modern health services require modern employment services
- Understands that staff work best for patients when they can strike a healthy balance between work and other aspects of their life outside work
- Accepts joint responsibility with staff to develop a range of working arrangements that balance the needs of patients and services with the needs of staff
- Values and supports staff according to the contribution they make to patient care and meeting service needs
- Provides personal and professional development and training opportunities that are accessible and open to all staff irrespective of their working patterns
- Has a range of policies and practices in place that enable staff to manage a healthy balance between work and their commitments outside work

The NHS Plan makes a commitment to invest in NHS staff. It recognises that a modern NHS must offer staff a better deal in their working lives. Improving the working lives of staff contributes directly to better patient care through improved recruitment and retention – and because patients want to be treated by well-motivated fairly rewarded staff. The way NHS employers treat staff will in future be part of the core performance measures and linked to the financial resources they receive.

- A new Performance Framework for Human Resources has been published to be incorporated into the overall Performance Assessment framework
- All NHS employers will be assessed against performance targets and the new Improving Working Lives [IWL] Standard
- By April 2003 all NHS employers are expected to be accredited as putting the IWL Standard into practice

This document sets out the Improving Working Lives Standard together with an out-line of the kite-marking process and evidence required from NHS employers seeking accreditation against the Standard.

The Standard has been developed through consultation with the service, with unions and staff representatives and with the Royal Colleges. It summarises the commitment expected from NHS employers to create well-managed, flexible working environments that support staff, promote their welfare and development, and respect their need to manage a healthy and productive balance between their work and their life outside work.

The Standard reinforces important related initiatives including the Staff Involvement Action Plan, the priorities and targets in the Equalities Framework – The Vital Connection and the junior doctors' New Deal. It reflects existing good practice within the NHS and recognises the employment practice expected of a good employer. It has been developed to be consistent with the wider Government programme to promote Work/Life Balance and Investors in People.

Each regional IWL taskforce will work with their Regional Office to develop a regional accreditation and review process that is consistent with their developing HR performance management framework. Accreditation against the Standard recognises the different stages of development within the NHS. Assessment will be decided regionally and will include review of the evidence presented by a range of representatives. Representatives can be drawn from across the NHS but will include members from:

- Improving Working Lives regional taskforce
- Regional Office
- Peer group representation from a similar organisation
- Trade Unions / professional bodies

The IWL taskforces together with Regional Offices are piloting the accreditation process and there will be very close involvement and support with SHRINE networks. The NHS Plan makes additional funding available to support NHS employers working towards meeting the Standard.

Every NHS Trust will receive £25,000 this year as an investment in staff involvement, to go into tangible, practical improvements in the working environment for staff. This money is to be spent as staff themselves determine, through their responses to staff attitude surveys or by other means of staff involvement – whether on providing a face-lift to staff rooms or improving other basic facilities for staff.

NHS hospitals and community Trusts are already providing occupational health services to their staff. An additional £6m in 2001/02, rising to £8m in 2003/04, is being invested to extend occupational health services to GPs and their staff. A working group is setting standards across the whole range of occupational health services in the NHS for publication by the end of the year.

An extra £140m is being invested by 2003/04 in personal development and training, to ensure that all professional staff are supported in keeping their skills up-to-date and to provide access to learning for all NHS staff without a professional qualification.

In addition, there will be a big expansion in support for childcare across the NHS. Over a quarter of NHS staff have children under the age of 14. Extra funding – building to £30m by 2004 – has been ear-marked to expand NHS sponsored and on-site nursery provision:

- To provide every NHS Trust, including primary care groups and Trusts, with a child-care co-ordinator to be the parent's advocate and adviser. They will co-ordinate the provision of nursery places and a network of secure provision for school-aged children drawing on after-school clubs, local childminding networks and holiday play-schemes to meet local needs
- A requirement for the provision of on-site nursery and child-care facilities will be built into all plans for new NHS hospitals, and existing commissions will be reviewed to ensure they make satisfactory provision for such facilities
- By 2004 there will be provision for on-site nurseries at around 100 hospitals, with places provided at an average subsidy of £30 a week

The NHS Plan sets high expectations of NHS employers. This extra investment in staff will support employers working to improve working life for their staff. The Standard and associated performance improvement and monitoring framework means this will no longer be left to chance.



Hugh Taylor  
Director of HR

The Standard is central to the HR Performance Framework that has been published and sets the following target:

## *Targets*

### By April 2001:

- All Trusts have achieved Stage One of the Improving Working Lives accreditation

### Regional Offices should ensure:

- Their IWL regional taskforce is strengthened and that good practice is widely disseminated through the taskforce
- All employers have in place plans for achieving IWL accreditation, including PCTs
- Systems are in place to assess employer progress and award accreditation
- Employers have in place a system for reviewing performance against the IWL Standard

### By April 2003:

- All NHS employers are expected to be accredited as putting the Improving Working Lives Standard into practice

# *Improving Working Lives*

Three stages of development



## **Pledge** – putting in place the people, policies and planning to achieve accreditation

Requires NHS employers to make a public commitment to work towards delivering against the Standard. The target is for NHS employers to reach this stage by April 2001. Primary Care Trusts commencing in 2000/01 may need more time to meet the target but should demonstrate in their business plans how they will achieve this stage by April 2002.

A model of the evidence that may be presented to achieve accreditation at this introductory level is opposite.

## Pledge – model evidence

- Statement by the Chief Executive of their personal commitment to implementing the IWL Standard
- Evidence of Board commitment to implement the IWL Standard
- Executive and non-executive board level director identified as accountable for IWL
- IWL accreditation to be taken forward by a multi-disciplinary team that is inclusive and representative of the workforce with a broad range of age, working patterns and NHS experience represented
- A statement showing how staff have been involved in determining spending plans for the £25,000 funding for practical improvements in the working environment
- An action plan for achieving change to implement the IWL Standard to include,
  - Specific HR strategy linked to Working Together to address flexible working patterns and supportive, family friendly policies
  - Financial plan identifying resources to support the implementation
  - Realistic time scale
  - Milestones to record progress
  - Two-way communications strategy to seek views and keep both the Board and staff informed about progress
  - Proposals for involving staff in implementation planning and review
  - Proposals for external peer group review
  - Consultation arrangements with representatives from unions and professional bodies



## **Practice** – reaching the Standard and putting policies into practice

NHS employers will have to provide clear evidence that their organisation is delivering against the Standard for staff day by day, night by night.

Examples of the broad areas where evidence will be required are listed opposite. It will be important to build up a portfolio that covers all staff groups and shows that the concerns of staff at all stages in their working life are being addressed.

The **Practice** stage allows for some areas where further progress is required. It will be awarded when the regional IWL accreditation team agree that most of the Standard is being met for most staff and that there is a clear, time-limited action plan in place to tackle any gaps.

### **Evidence**

- HR Strategy to support service targets
- Meeting HR performance targets
- Board commitment to:
  - Team-based employee self rostering
  - Annual hours arrangements
  - Childcare support
  - Reduced hours options
  - Flexi-time
  - Carers Support
  - Career Breaks
  - Flexible Retirement
- Building a diverse workforce that reflects the local community
- Changing the long hours culture
- Healthy workplace commitment
- Managers leading by example
- Finding out what working arrangements work for staff
- Challenging traditional working patterns
- Involving staff in the design and development of better, flexible working practices
- Conducting annual staff attitude surveys – asking relevant questions and acting on the key messages
- HR policies and processes that make a difference to individuals
- Reducing staff turnover
- Accessible training and development packages for all staff

The IWL accreditation kite-mark will be awarded when NHS have built a portfolio of evidence that they are delivering an improved working life for staff working across the Trust. The criteria and detailed evidence required for each statement within the Standard are set out overleaf.

## *Improving Working Lives Standard*

NHS employers committed to improving the working lives of people who work in the NHS:

### Recognises that modern health services require modern employment services

- Has a HR strategy in place for the organisation to deliver against the NHS Plan, National Priorities and Working Together targets

#### **Evidence**

- Has an HR plan in place that supports the redesign of care around patients
- Manages and measures HR performance as part of organisational performance against the Performance Assessment Framework
- Can demonstrate year-on-year improvements in the quality of working life for staff, including:
  - meeting Working Together targets for reductions in violence against staff, accidents to staff and levels of sick absence
  - occupational health services, and counselling services available to all staff and meet nationally agreed standards
- Conducts and publishes an annual Staff Attitude Survey that complies with best practice as set out in national guidance, and acts on the key messages
- Can provide evidence of how the HR strategy complements and supports Making a Difference, National Service Frameworks and Clinical Governance

## Understands that staff work best for patients when they can strike a healthy balance between work and other aspects of their life outside work

- Demonstrates leadership from the top and Board commitment to more flexible, supportive, family friendly and culturally sensitive ways of working and training

### **Evidence**

- Has developed the business case for supporting the IWL Standard and agreed appropriate levels of resource to support the commitment
  - Progress towards tackling the long hours culture, and implementing the Working Times Regulations for all staff groups, including doctors
  - Receives regular Board up-dates about the application of the Standard and monitors its impact for all staff groups at all levels in the organisation
  - Has a Trust Board executive and non-executive lead for the application of the Standard
  - Has formal Staff Side involvement in implementing IWL
  - Commitment to the IWL Standard publicised and flagged in Trust Annual Reports and other organisation publications
  - Staff Attitude Survey has relevant questions about quality of working life and flexible working and training that are analysed by staff group, ethnicity, gender, age and working patterns
- Encourages managers to lead by example

### **Evidence**

- Evidence of senior and middle managers adopting flexible working practices eg senior managers working part-time and taking advantage of Trust IWL initiatives. Statements in support from managers should cover a range of disciplines and clinical areas
- Training and development for managers to support the IWL Standard

## Accepts a joint responsibility with staff to develop a range of working arrangements that balance the needs of patients and services with the needs of staff

- Finds out what working patterns staff can and wish to work

### **Evidence**

- Processes in place to determine staff preferences, for example through surveys, workshops, focus groups
  - Training for line managers encourages discussion with individual staff to find out their preferences
  - Selection processes for new staff establish preferred working patterns
- Challenges traditional working and training practices and reviews arrangements regularly

### **Evidence**

- Can demonstrate that staff are able to review and agree changes in their working patterns on a temporary or permanent basis at different stages in their careers and as their personal circumstances change  
Evidence might include:
  - inclusion of reviews as part of performance appraisal processes
  - responses to Staff Attitude Survey questions such as ‘I feel able to work flexible hours when I need to’ or ‘This Trust [my manager] promotes flexible hours and supports changes in work patterns’
  - numbers of staff who have been able to change working patterns at the same level after life events such as maternity, paternity, adoption, bereavement, illness in the family, pre-retirement
  - reduction in staff turnover due to inflexibility recorded in exit interviews/forms
  - flexible retirement arrangements
- Has in place a range of different working and training patterns, including team based and employee-led rostering and other systems for workforce scheduling that enable staff to have greater control over the times and hours they work

- Involves staff in design and development of different working patterns

**Evidence**

- Can demonstrate an effective working relationship with Staff Side on a range of issues relating to IWL
- Staff involvement in initiatives to investigate the scope for different working patterns, pilot their development and steer their introduction
- Involvement of staff in the introduction of team-based and employee-led rostering arrangements
- Evidence should be provided for all staff groups and show a systematic approach to involving staff in the development of more flexible ways of working across the organisation

## Values and supports staff according to the contribution they make to patient care and meeting the needs of the service

- Staff across the organisation from all disciplines and irrespective of their role in the organisation or working patterns demonstrate their commitment to the organisation and feel the organisation is committed to their well-being

### **Evidence**

- Vacancy and turnover rates are improving and are average or better than for the local market conditions
  - Supported by responses to Staff Attitude Survey questions such as 'I am rewarded fairly in view of my experience' and 'People have equal access to career progression'
  - Staff Attitude Survey assesses satisfaction with security, facilities, accommodation and catering, and scores are not differentiated by working patterns
- Staff are treated with dignity and respect

### **Evidence**

- Has met the criteria to use the Employment Service disability symbol ✓✓
- Can provide evidence of working towards the priorities and targets set out in the national Equalities Framework – The Vital Connection
- Can demonstrate that managers are held accountable for delivering fair employment practice and equality of opportunity
- Examples of staff feeling supported and able to challenge harassment, bullying and discriminatory behaviour based on differences in language, culture, religion, sexuality, age, gender or employment status

## Provides personal and professional development and training opportunities that are accessible and open to all staff irrespective of their working patterns

- Demonstrates appropriate investment in training for staff who have patterns of working that are not standard

### **Evidence**

- Actual and planned budgets for training and personal development are disbursed appropriately across all staff, including those who work flexibly, work less than full time hours, have taken career breaks, work predominantly nights or weekends or evenings, work on a temporary but regular basis, or have other patterns of working that are not standard
- Time off and support for training and development is appropriate
- Can demonstrate equal access to other development opportunities through secondments, bursaries, international exchanges etc
- Supported by responses to Staff Attitude Survey questions such as 'I feel I have equal access to training and development opportunities' and 'I am encouraged to develop new skills'

## Has a range of policies and practices in place that enable staff to manage a healthy balance between work and their commitments outside work

- Range of HR policies and practical support in place to meet the specific needs of staff

### **Evidence**

- Can demonstrate that policies and practical support have been developed in response to staff interests and tested with staff, and are regularly reviewed
  - Supported by document evidence such as staff hand books and information sheets and a statement from any relevant staff side committee
  - Can demonstrate compliance with the Working Time regulations
- Staff understand what policies and support are available and how to access them

### **Evidence**

- Communication strategy is in place to raise awareness for both staff, managers and staff representatives
  - Good up-take of support arrangements and relevant HR policies across the organisation
- Ensures that accessible, affordable and good quality childcare support is available to meet local needs

### **Evidence**

- Childcare co-ordinator in place and active as the parent's adviser and advocate for flexible working patterns
  - Co-ordinated provision of nursery places and secure provision for school-aged children: after-schools clubs, local child-minding networks and holiday play-schemes to meet identified local need
- HR policies and support are available to all staff and fairly and consistently applied

### **Evidence**

- Responses to relevant questions in the Staff Attitude survey are not differentiated by age, ethnicity, staff group, role in the organisation, gender or working patterns



## Practice+

NHS employers achieving **Practice** accreditation will be reviewed by agreement between the Trust and their regional IWL accreditation team to check that any gaps in the Standard have been remedied. **Practice+** accreditation will be awarded when the regional IWL accreditation team is satisfied that the Standard is being met in full for all staff.

Each region has an appointed 'Champion' who leads a multi-disciplinary task force, including staff-side representatives, who encourage organisations to develop flexible and family-friendly policies. Taskforces also identify and share good practice within their region.

The Regional Champions are:

#### **WEST MIDLANDS**

##### **Peter Blythin**

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North Staffordshire Hospital NHS Trust  
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E-mail: samm\_morris16@yahoo.com

#### **LONDON**

##### **Jacqueline Docherty**

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#### **TRENT**

##### **Jackie Daniels**

Director of Nursing Services  
Doncaster Royal Infirmary & Montagu Hospital NHS Trust  
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#### **SOUTH WEST**

##### **Julie Burgess**

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North Bristol NHS Trust  
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## **SOUTH EAST**

### **Chris McFarlane**

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## **NORTH WEST**

### **Kath Holbourn**

Director of Nursing

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## **EASTERN**

### **Lynne Woodcock**

Director of Nursing

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## **NORTHERN & YORKSHIRE**

### **Andrea Hopkins**

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## **FURTHER ENQUIRIES:**

NHS Executive

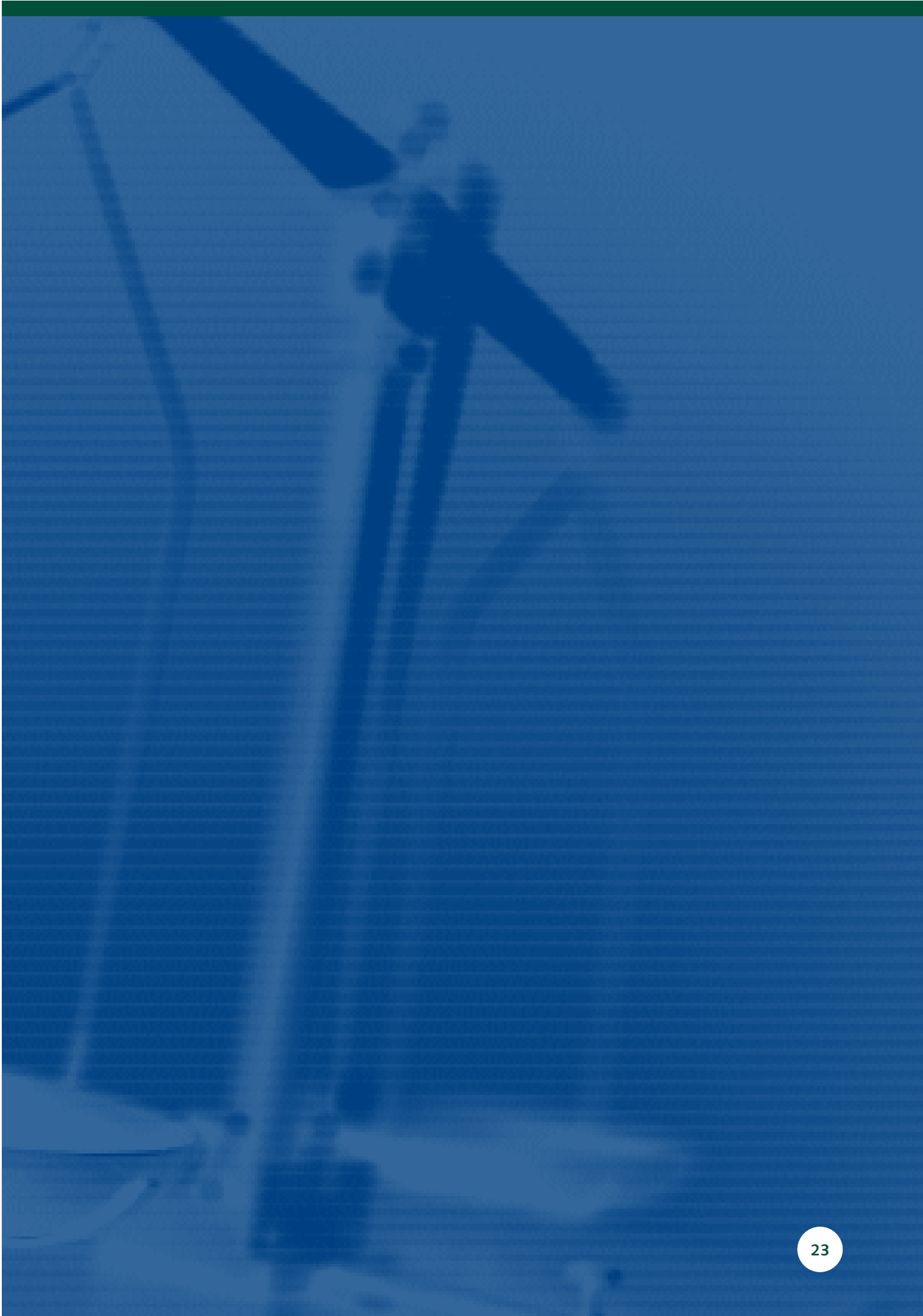
Telephone: 0113 254 5292

Fax: 0113 254 5795

## List of Publications:

Working Together – securing a quality workforce for the NHS	<a href="http://www.open.gov.newnhs/hrstrat.htm">www.open.gov.newnhs/hrstrat.htm</a>
Making a Difference – strengthening nursing midwifery and health visiting contribution	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk/nurstrat.htm">www.doh.gov.uk/nurstrat.htm</a>
Working Lives	
Improving Working Lives – consultation booklet	
Working Lives – programmes for change	
Flexible Retirement – guidance for managers	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk/rrep">www.doh.gov.uk/rrep</a>
Flexible Retirement – guidance for staff	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk/rrep">www.doh.gov.uk/rrep</a>
The Vital Connection – an equalities framework for the NHS	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk/nhsequality.htm">www.doh.gov.uk/nhsequality.htm</a>
Looking Beyond Labels	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk/nhsequality.htm">www.doh.gov.uk/nhsequality.htm</a>
Tackling Racial Harassment in the NHS – a plan for action	<a href="http://www.racenshs.org">www.racenshs.org</a>
Equal Opportunities and Monitoring in NHS Trusts (IRS Research)	HSC 1998/148
Staff Involvement – self assessment tool	
Zero Tolerance	HSC 1999/226
The Management of Health, Safety & Welfare Issues for NHS Staff	HSC 1998/064
Provision of Counselling Services for Staff in the NHS	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk">www.doh.gov.uk</a>
HR Performance Framework	<a href="http://www.doh.gov.uk">www.doh.gov.uk</a>

The above documents can be obtained from:  
NHS Response-line: 0541 555 455  
Department of Health, PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH  
Fax: 01623 724 524





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