

WE ARE THE NHS:

People Plan for 2020/21 - action for us all



Wellbeing Guardians

Implementation guide for NHS systems and organisations

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NHS England and NHS Improvement



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Purpose of this document

- The NHS [People Plan 2020-21](#) sets out national health and wellbeing policy ambitions to enable our system stakeholders to create a culture of wellbeing, where our NHS people are well looked after and cared for. These policy areas outline three key roles:
 - **Wellbeing Guardians:** A non-executive director (or equivalent) who looks at the organisation's activities from a health and wellbeing perspective and acts as a critical friend.
 - **Health and Wellbeing Champions:** People at all levels of our NHS organisations who promote and identify ways to enable the wellbeing of their colleagues.
 - **Health and Wellbeing Conversations:** Supportive conversations between colleagues and their line managers (or those with caring responsibilities) at least once a year to openly discuss their health and wellbeing and develop a personalised plan.
- This document provides summary guidance to NHS organisations as they implement the Wellbeing Guardian role, alongside other resources.

What is a Wellbeing Guardian?

Background

- The NHS Staff and Learners' Mental Wellbeing Commission (2019), launched by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, identified a lack of uniformity in board-level leadership around the wellbeing of our NHS people.
- The review recommended improving the consistency across NHS boards through the introduction of a board-level Wellbeing Guardian role, which has more recently been referenced in the NHS People Plan (2020).

Vision for the role

- The Wellbeing Guardian is recommended to be a board-level role that provides oversight, assurance and support to the NHS board (or equivalent senior leadership team in non-trust settings) to fulfil their legal responsibility in ensuring the health and wellbeing of our NHS people.
- The expectation is for this role to be introduced in every local, regional and national NHS organisation (for example at NHS Trusts, within a Primary Care Network, at CCG level and at national NHS E&I level).

Who can be a Wellbeing Guardian?

- Where organisations have non-executive directors (NEDs), it is recommended that it is one of them who is appointed into the Wellbeing Guardian role.
- Where organisations do not have a NED (for example in primary care or in a CCG), it is recommended that an equivalent role fulfils the responsibilities the Wellbeing Guardian. For example, this could be the Clinical Director of a Primary Care Network (PCN).
- The Wellbeing Guardian should:
 - Care about people, find ways to connect with staff and staff networks and listen well
 - Work closely with and support the HR Director and other executives who lead in this area
 - Feel confident in challenging the Board and other senior leaders, questioning decisions that could impact on the wellbeing of our NHS people, and challenging behaviours or aspects of the culture that are likely to be detrimental to others.
 - Be fully cognisant of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act and be committed to ensuring that disparities on the basis of a protected characteristic are eradicated.

The 9 board principles supported by the wellbeing guardian (1/2)

Principle One

The health and wellbeing of our NHS people and those learning and working in the NHS should not be compromised by the work they do for the NHS.

Principle Two

Where an individual or team is exposed to a particularly distressing clinical event, board time should be made available to assure the board and the wellbeing guardian that the wellbeing impact on those NHS staff and learners has been checked.

Principle Three

Regular assurance will be provided to the wellbeing guardian to ensure that wellness induction (previously wellbeing 'check-in') are being provided to all new NHS people on appointment and to all learners on placement in the NHS, as outlined in the 2019 NHS Staff and Learners' Mental Wellbeing Review's recommendations.

Principle Four

The wellbeing guardian will receive assurance that all our NHS people and those learning in the NHS have ready access to a self-referral, proactive and confidential occupational health service that promotes and protects wellbeing.

Principle Five

The death by suicide of any member of our NHS people or a learner working in an NHS organisation will be independently examined and the findings reported through the board to the wellbeing guardian.

The 9 board principles supported by the wellbeing guardian (2/2)

Principle Six

The NHS will ensure that all our NHS people and learners have an environment that is both safe and supportive of their mental and psychological wellbeing, as well as their physical wellbeing.

Principle Seven

The NHS will ensure that the cultural and spiritual needs of our NHS people and those learning in the NHS are protected, and equitable and appropriate wellbeing support for overseas NHS people and learners working in the NHS.

Principle Eight

The NHS will ensure the wellbeing and make the necessary adjustments for the nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010 (including consideration for how intersectionality may impact wellbeing).

Principle Nine

The wellbeing guardian will provide suitable challenge to the board to be assured that the organisation is working with system leaders and regulators, to ensure that wellbeing is given the same weight as other aspects in organisational performance assessment.

How do I implement a wellbeing guardian in my organisation?

- We acknowledge that organisations and systems are at different places in their journey to support and improve the health and wellbeing of our NHS people, therefore we have suggested the following phases to support with implementation of the Wellbeing Guardian role.
- We would recommend that boards/organisations self-assess against the below three phases to determine their current “status”. They can then follow the guidance below on what potential next steps could be.

Phase 1: Health and wellbeing has limited coverage at board level

Undertake NHS Health and Wellbeing Diagnostic to assess current health and wellbeing performance and identify priority activities (Principle 1).

Identify a wellbeing guardian.

Agree the priority actions to be included in the wellbeing guardian role description and how the nine principles will be phased in.

Phase 2: Principles of wellbeing guardian role are largely embedded

Wellbeing guardian role is established and functioning well within the board.

Most of the nine principles are routinely evidenced at board meetings, including reference to supporting equality and inclusion in the workplace.

A holistic health and wellbeing strategy is in place (either standalone or as part of a wider people strategy) and being delivered.

Staff experience measures indicate a compassionate culture is in place or being created.

Phase 3: Health and wellbeing is routinely considered and included in board activity

All board members routinely consider the holistic health and wellbeing of our NHS people in their strategic and operational plans and performance reporting.

The board regularly hears feedback, including in the form of staff stories.

All nine principles are being delivered.

The NHS Health and Wellbeing Diagnostic Tool dashboard is green.

Check list – Phase One

To support systems with the rollout of the Wellbeing Guardian role, the Board is invited to use this checklist to help inform their thinking and support the delivery of this role.

Step	Yes/No
Have we completed our NHS Health and Wellbeing Diagnostic assessment to assess current health and wellbeing performance and identify priority activities? If not, do we need any support in completing this?	
Have we as the board agreed which priority actions should be included in the Wellbeing Guardian role description and how the nine principles will be phased in?	
Do we currently have any NEDs appointed to our board? If not, what similar role is in place?	
Have we identified a suitable candidate for the Wellbeing Guardian?	
Do we now feel confident to move on to phase two?	

Check list – Phase Two

To support systems with the rollout of the Wellbeing Guardian role, the Board is invited to use the below checklist to help shape their thinking and support the delivery of this role.

Step	Yes/No
Our Wellbeing Guardian role is established and working well within the board.	
We are confident that most of the nine principles are routinely evidenced at board meetings and that we have a clear plan in place to support equality and inclusion in the workplace.	
We have an organisation-wide health and wellbeing strategy in place that is being delivered by the organisation and reviewed regularly by the Board. If not, do we need to add this to our agenda and a standing item?	
Our local staff experience measures indicate a compassionate and inclusive culture is in place or is in development, as outlined in the NHS People Plan.	
We feel confident to move on to phase three.	

Check list – Phase Three

To support systems with the rollout of the Wellbeing Guardian role, the Board is invited to use the below checklist to help shape their thinking and support the delivery of this role.

Step	Yes/No
<p>All board members routinely consider the health and wellbeing of our workforce in their strategic and operational plans and performance reporting.</p> <p>If not, how do we introduce this and embed it across the board?</p>	
<p>We have processes in place that enable staff stories to be regularly fed back to the board.</p>	
<p>We are confident that all nine principles outlined in this document are being delivered.</p>	
<p>We have completed the NHS Health and Wellbeing Diagnostic Tool and our dashboard is green.</p>	

Future national resources under development

NHS England and NHS Improvement believe improving the wellbeing of our NHS people is a long-term culture change initiative and are committed to providing ongoing support to NHS organisations to implement the wellbeing guardian role.

A further suite of supportive resources will be co-designed with wellbeing guardians to enable them and their organisations to fully realise this ambition, and to implement it in a way that builds on and complements local interventions. This may include;

- Manager resources, guidelines and learning
- Employee resources, guidelines and learning
- Sharing of best practice
- Community of practice events to support implementation

If you have examples of best practice or wish to contribute to the development of this national work, please contact Ournhspeople.hwb@nhs.net

One page summary of the 9 board principles supported by the wellbeing guardian

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