

Position Statement Sustainability and Transformation Plans



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Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) are of critical importance to realising the ambitious plans for transforming health and social care services, as detailed in the Five Year Forward View. STPs will make a vital contribution to delivering significant quality and productivity gains through further integration of health and social care services, new care models, greater collaboration between providers and commissioners and genuine engagement with service users, staff and other stakeholders.

The content of STPs should reflect the strategic priorities set out in NHS planning guidance, including that of implementing the recommendations contained in Better Births by 2020/21. Accordingly, there should be alignment between the local maternity transformation plans that are being developed by the Local Maternity System (LMS) and the wider STP. Proposals to reconfigure maternity services should only be included in STPs if they are consistent with the LMS maternity transformation plan and can demonstrate how the changes will improve safety and quality.

STPs should be developed and implemented in partnership with service users, local communities and staff organisations. STPs and associated papers should be publicly available. Processes for developing, implementing and monitoring STPs should be transparent and subject to the scrutiny of local authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Health and Wellbeing Boards. STPs should be subject to genuine consultation, which should include articulating the case for change and the intended benefits.

Proposals for service transformation can only proceed if this is in conjunction with an agreed employment security package for staff.

Background and Context

STPs are local plans, developed by providers of NHS and social care services, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and local authorities, which set out proposals for improving people's health and delivering higher quality and financially sustainable health and care services. There are 44 STP geographical areas (or 'footprints') across England, covering an average population of 1.2 million people and five CCGs.

The plans are meant to cover all aspects of NHS spending, including specialised services and primary care, as well as focusing on better integration with social care and other local authority services. STPs cover a five year period to 2020/21, with final plans submitted to NHS England in October 2016, to be used as the basis for new operational plans and commissioning contracts.

STPs will also play a central role in supporting local leadership and action in delivering the vision and recommendations set out in Better Births, which are now being taken forward as part of the Maternity Transformation Programme. It was therefore disappointing that plans for improving maternity services featured in only a minority of STPs published in October 2016. The RCM will continue to press local and national bodies to rectify these omissions.

According to commissioning guidance from NHS England:

- Commissioners and providers should work collaboratively to establish an LMS that is coterminous with the STP footprint.
- The LMS will essentially act as the maternity element of the STP, with which it needs to be aligned. The LMS should be overseen by the STP's strategic partnership board and it is recommended that the LMS forms a formal sub-group of the STP.
- The LMS will develop and implement a local plan to transform maternity services as part of the local STP. The plan should be agreed by the strategic partnership boards of both the LMS and the STP.

Whilst STPs are required to set out plans for achieving financial balance by 2020, the proposals set out in some STP footprints are causing significant concerns because they prioritise short term cost-cutting over longer term strategies, such as integrating health and social care services,

for achieving efficiency and productivity gains. Since the publication of the Five Year Forward View the financial situation for the NHS and social care has deteriorated; without a significant boost to funding, STPs will find it increasingly difficult to prioritise service transformation above tackling current financial and service pressures.

Guidance on STPs envisaged an engagement process involving service users, clinicians, communities, staff and other partners in order to demonstrate that the plans commanded support from local stakeholders. Indeed NHS planning and contracting guidance states that STPs should set out the degree of local consensus and support that proposals command and the extent to which the public and other local stakeholders have been engaged in their development. However experience to date suggests that many STP footprints have lacked transparency and in some cases have bypassed proper consultation with service users, staff and the public. Guidance from NHS England makes it clear that this is unacceptable and that consultation and engagement are integral to STPs going forward.

The way in which STPs shape service design to match the needs of their population is likely to involve a large degree of change for staff. This could involve new ways of working or changes to how services are organised and delivered, where staff work and who employs staff. It is therefore vital that staff's employment status, terms and conditions of employment, pay and pension arrangements are guaranteed and protected. Accordingly, any change programme should include consultation and meaningful engagement with staff and their representative unions. This will also necessitate developing a workforce strategy that takes account of key issues, such as:

- Transfer and protection arrangements
- Staffing levels
- Skill mix
- Training requirements
- Management resources
- Staff wellbeing during change
- Equality and diversity issues

The RCM will continue to monitor the extent to which STPs engage with service users, staff and other partners and evaluate the impact of STPs and maternity transformation plans on local services.

Further reading

NHS England (2016) NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance for 2017-19

NHS England (2017) Better Births: Improving outcomes of maternity services in England Resource pack for Local Maternity Systems

The King's Fund (2017) Delivering sustainability and transformation plans



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