



Do STPs hold the key to the NHS living within its means?

Sustainability Transformation Plans (STPs) are a series of local 'footprints' split into 44 different locations which will review all aspects of NHS spending and determine the future financial, clinical and organisational structures of healthcare in England. We ask: do STPs hold the key to the NHS living within its means?



Andrew Pow, director at Hall Liddy, medical accounting specialists

The NHS has big issues in trying to obtain unprecedented savings at a time of significant increased demand. As the majority of NHS spend is in secondary care the scope for saving is greater there but, in order to do this, demand must be managed in primary care. This raises real concerns over the capacity of already overstretched GP services.

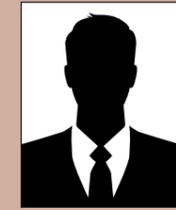
Shortages of both doctors and nurses will make absorption of additional services difficult. Premises, in many cases, are not fit for purpose and lack space and GPs don't have the time to manage another round of organisational change. The biggest risks in relation to GP closures remain the difficulties of recruitment and several years of inadequate investment. STPs need to address these risks, ensure general practice can cope and that change is managed without creating another tier of expensive NHS organisations. Breaking down barriers and collaboration will be key to success.



Dr Maureen Baker, chair of the RCGP

The RCGP's 33 regional ambassadors are engaging with STP leaders to ensure the views of frontline general practice are heard in these important discussions. We are encouraging all STP areas to think very carefully about how general practice – the service that deals with 90% of patient contacts – fits into their plans for the future. Our ambassadors are urging STP areas to ensure that general practice receives the urgent investment and support it needs in line with the aims of the *GP Forward View* published in April.

The STPs are under pressure to deal with financial problems in the acute sector but long term vision is needed here – the key to building a sustainable NHS for the future is to invest in general practice and the services that wrap around it in the community.



NHS England spokesperson

STPs are, first and foremost, about improving quality across the NHS, with better use of primary care at their heart. We know that more care needs to be provided closer to the home and this will mean new forms of collaborative working for those in general practice and beyond. For example, GPs and their colleagues in Whitstable have been working together at scale to provide many of the tests, investigations, minor injuries and minor surgery traditionally provided in hospital; this has produced improved outcomes and experience for patients as well as significant cost savings.

The STP process should help to foster and expand such new care models, building on the success of the vanguard programme. It is underpinned by a growing share of the national primary care budget to 2020-21 – reversing the decline in recent years – to deliver the vision set out in the *General Practice Forward View*.

