

What are they and where do they come from?

Sustainability and Transformation Plans, more commonly referred to as STPs, are local responses to the £30bn gap between funds needed to maintain current NHS services, and what the Government is proposing to spend by 2020/21. The central proposal for closing the gap is detailed in the [Five Year Forward View](#), published in 2014.

STPs outline how savings are going to be made in each of the designated areas. On average, each STP must make provision for saving around £450m by 20/21.

The plans have no legal basis, and there is no formal public scrutiny. They are described by the Government as proposals for discussion. There are [already suggestions](#) that there will only be funding to support some of the proposals, and priority will be given to those that make the most efficiency savings.

The plans set out a move to greater integration of health and social care, and more collaborative working across traditional organisational and sectoral boundaries. They are submitted to NHS England for sign off, however, so far, no STPs have been signed off because of concerns about the financial proposals that have been made.

What does the Five Year Forward View say?

The [Five Year Forward View](#) (FYFV) is an attempt to set out a single clear strategy for how the NHS can respond to the changing environment it is operating in with an aging population, more complex patient needs, poor lifestyle habits, increased technological capacity and intense financial pressures. The FYFV includes specific core themes:

- Do more preventative work and improve people's ability to take care of their own well-being
- Integrate services more effectively so that care is provided in response to patient need, rather than according to organisational structure
- Empower primary care to do more through multi-speciality community providers and more efficiently organised systems connecting primary with acute care

Who is doing them?

The country has been split into 44 "footprints." These are geographically specific areas that determine who is going to be involved in which STP. There are 3 covering the North West region – Cheshire and Merseyside, Greater Manchester, and Lancashire and Cumbria.

Each footprint involves several organisations, usually including the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Local Authorities, and primary, secondary and tertiary care providers. They cover health and social care.

The process of drafting the plans has been a secretive one generally, with little consultation of staff or patients. Under public pressure, the plans were published towards the end of 2016, and some public consultation events are now taking place.

What proposals do the STPs contain?

There are many themes common to the North West STPs. They draw heavily for inspiration on the FYFV:

- A greater focus on primary and community care as opposed to the acute sector

- Establishment of Local Care Organisations (LCOs)
- Hospital reconfigurations to improve consistency of service delivery across the region
- Workforce Repository and Planning Tool (WRaPT) being used in some areas to record temporary staff and agency use and performance.
- Development of a wider set of new nursing roles
- Supporting services to be standardised across each STP area.
- Review specialised services to ensure they are being commissioned and delivered more effectively
- Focus on prevention, proactive care and personal responsibility/public
- Use more technology to deliver services

What support is available to assist with delivery?

The Government is making a Sustainability and Transformation Fund of £2.1bn available for CCGs to bid for. £1.6bn of this is dedicated to reducing deficits, and £0.5bn to transforming services. Access to the fund is conditional on STPs eliminating their deficits by 2017, although this position is being softened in light of recent unprecedented winter pressures on the health service.

[The BMA, through Freedom of Information](#) requests, has ascertained that, in the 36 out of 44 footprint areas that responded to them, the total capital investment required would be £9.5bn. The North West requires just over £1.7bn. The Department of Health had allocated an annual capital budget of £4.8bn until 2020/21, but already £1.2bn of that has been siphoned off for use elsewhere.

What difference will they make?

At this stage it is very hard to tell. The plans contain some very broad stroke ambitions that have the potential to bring about significant change. However, the detail, particularly when it comes to aspects of the proposals such as changes to workforce, needs much more clarification.

What is the RCN doing?

The RCN is actively engaging with CCGs and others involved in developing STPs to put forward the perspective of Nurses and Nursing staff and challenge proposals that threaten jobs and services. We have launched the [integration toolkit](#). It is a resource to help Nurses and Nursing staff to capitalise on opportunities to influence decision-making.

What can you do?

- **Contribute to consultations**
Take advantage of any public consultation events organised by your STP partnership and any of the agencies involved. Ask questions about what their plans are, when it will happen and what the implications of both success and failure will be for your local area.
- **Get your Local Council involved**
Go along to any public meetings hosted by your Local Council – many are not in favour of their STPs because of the additional burden being put on them to deliver more social care for less money. Find out what their position is and ask questions about the implications for your local area.
- **Contact your MP**
Find out what your MP's position is on the STP proposals in your area and provide them with information about the potential impact – find out what they are planning to do about it.
- **Raise awareness among colleagues and friends**
There are still large parts of the NHS workforce and the public who are not aware of what is going on. Finding opportunities to talk to others about STPs, and to encourage them to take the actions above, will assist with holding decision-makers accountable to those who will be directly affected in their local area.