



# Integrating care

**Next steps to building strong and effective integrated care systems  
across England**

# Contents

Introduction .....	2
Purpose .....	4
Putting this into practice .....	9
Legislative proposals .....	27
Implications and next steps .....	33

# Introduction

This document builds on previous publications that set out proposals for legislative reform and is primarily focused on the operational direction of travel. It opens up a discussion with the NHS and its partners about how ICSs could be embedded in legislation or guidance. Decisions on legislation will of course then be for Government and Parliament to make.

This builds on the route map set out in the *NHS Long Term Plan*, for health and care joined up locally around people's needs. It signals a renewed ambition for how we can support **greater collaboration** between partners in health and care systems to help accelerate progress in meeting our most critical health and care challenges.

It details how systems and their constituent organisations will accelerate **collaborative ways of working** in future, considering the key components of an effective integrated care system (ICS) and reflecting what a range of local leaders have told us about their experiences during the past two years, including the immediate and long-term challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These are significant new steps towards the ambition set out in the *NHS Long Term Plan*, building on the experience of the earliest ICSs and other areas. Our challenge now is to spread their experience to every part of England. From April 2021 this will require all parts of our health and care system to work together as Integrated Care Systems, involving:

- Stronger **partnerships in local places** between the NHS, local government and others with a more central role for primary care in providing joined-up care;
- **Provider organisations** being asked to step forward in formal collaborative arrangements that allow them to operate at scale; and
- Developing strategic **commissioning** through systems with a focus on population health outcomes;
- The use of **digital and data** to drive system working, connect health and care providers, improve outcomes and put the citizen at the heart of their own care.

This document also describes options for giving ICSs a firmer footing in **legislation** likely to take effect from April 2022 (subject to Parliamentary decision). These proposals sit alongside other recommendations aimed at removing legislative barriers to integration across health bodies and with social care, to help deliver better care and outcomes for patients through collaboration, and to join up national leadership more formally. NHS England and NHS Improvement are inviting views

on these proposed options from all interested individuals and organisations by Friday 8 January 2021.

It builds on, and should be read alongside, the commitments and ambitions set out in the *NHS Long Term Plan (2019)*, [\*Breaking Down Barriers to Better Health and Care \(2019\)\*](#) and *Designing ICSs in England (2019)*, and our [\*recommendations to Government and Parliament for legislative change \(2019\)\*](#).

# 1. Purpose

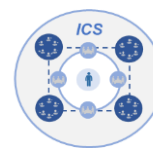
- 1.1. The NHS belongs to us all<sup>1</sup> and any changes to it must bring clear improvements for our health and care. Since 2018, integrated care systems (ICSs) have begun doing just this, enabling NHS organisations, local councils, frontline professionals and others to join forces to plan and provide around residents' needs as locally as possible.
- 1.2. By doing this, they have driven a 'bottom-up' response to the big health and care challenges that we and other countries across the world face and have made a real difference to people's lives. They have improved health, developed better and more seamless services and ensured public resources are used where they can have the greatest impact.
- 1.3. These achievements have happened despite persistent complexity and fragmentation. This document describes how we will simplify support to local leaders in systems, making it easier for them to achieve their ambitions. Our proposals are designed to serve four fundamental purposes:
  - improving population health and healthcare;
  - tackling unequal outcomes and access;
  - enhancing productivity and value for money; and
  - helping the NHS to support broader social and economic development.
- 1.4. The *NHS Long Term Plan* set out a widely supported route map to tackle our greatest health challenges, from improving cancer care to transforming mental health, from giving young people a healthy start in life to closing the gaps in health inequalities in communities, and enabling people to look after their own health and wellbeing.
- 1.5. The COVID-19 pandemic has given the NHS and its partners their biggest challenge of the past 70 years, shining a light on the most successful approaches to protecting health and treating disease. Vulnerable people need support that is joined up across councils, NHS, care and voluntary organisations; all based on a common understanding of the risks different people face. Similarly, no hospital could rise to the challenge alone, and new pathways have rapidly developed across multiple providers that enable and protect capacity for urgent non-COVID care.
- 1.6. This has all been backed up by mutual aid agreements, including with local councils, and shared learning to better understand effective response. It has

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>

required openness in data sharing, commitment to collaboration in the interests of patients and communities, and agile collective decision-making.

- 1.7. The significant challenges that face health and care as we recover from the pandemic make it even more important to have strong and thriving systems for the medium term. Important changes were driven by emergency response but must be hard-wired into our future working so that the gains of 2020 can endure. DHSC's 'Busting Bureaucracy: Empowering frontline staff by reducing excess bureaucracy in the health and care system in England' report, published on 24 November 2020, describes in detail some of these important areas of change. The report found that there are many sources of excess bureaucracy and that these are often exacerbated by duplicative or disproportionate assurance systems and poorly integrated systems at a national, regional and local level. The report also acknowledges that the more levels of hierarchy in a system, the more likely it is that bureaucracy will exist and grow. ICSs therefore have the potential to reduce bureaucracy through increased collaboration, leaner oversight through streamlined assurance structures and smarter data-sharing agreements.
- 1.8. To deliver the core aims and purposes set out above, we will need to devolve more functions and resources from national and regional levels to local systems, to develop effective models for joined-up working at "place", ensure we are taking advantage of the transformative potential of digital and data, and to embed a central role for providers collaborating across bigger footprints for better and more efficient outcomes. The aim is a progressively deepening relationship between the NHS and local authorities, including on health improvement and wellbeing.
- 1.9. This reflects three important observations, building on the *NHS Long Term Plan's* vision of health and care joined up locally around people's needs:
  - **decisions taken closer to the communities** they affect are likely to lead to better outcomes;
  - **collaboration between partners in a place** across health, care services, public health, and voluntary sector can overcome competing objectives and separate funding flows to help address health inequalities, improve outcomes, and deliver joined-up, efficient services for people; and
  - **collaboration between providers** (ambulance, hospital and mental health) across larger geographic footprints is likely to be more effective than competition in sustaining high quality care, tackling unequal access to services, and enhancing productivity.
- 1.10. This takes forward what leaders from a range of systems have told us about their experiences during the past two years.

## Devolution of functions and resources



- 1.11. Joining up delivery is not enough on its own. In many areas, we can shift national or regional resources and decision-making so that these are closer to the people they serve. For example, it will make sense to plan, commission and organise certain specialised services at ICS level, and to devolve a greater share of primary care funding and improvement resource to this more local level.
- 1.12. ICSs also need to be able to ensure collectively that they are addressing the right priorities for their residents and using their collective resources wisely. They will need to work together across partners to determine:
- **distribution of financial resources** to places and sectors that is targeted at areas of greatest need and tackling inequalities;
  - **improvement and transformation resource** that can be used flexibly to address system priorities;
  - **operational delivery** arrangements that are based on collective accountability between partners;
  - **workforce planning, commissioning and development** to ensure that our people and teams are supported and able to lead fulfilling and balanced lives;
  - **emergency planning and response** to join up action at times of greatest need; and
  - the use of **digital and data** to drive system working and improved outcomes.

## “Place”: an important building block for health and care integration



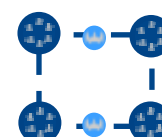
- 1.13. For most people their day-to-day care and support needs will be expressed and met locally in the place where they live. An important building block for the future health and care system is therefore at ‘**place**.’
- 1.14. For most areas, this will mean long-established local authority boundaries (at which joint strategic needs assessments and health and wellbeing strategies are made). But the right size may vary for different areas, for example reflecting where meaningful local communities exist and what makes sense to all partners. Within each place, services are joined up through primary care networks (PCNs) integrating care in neighbourhoods.
- 1.15. Our ambition is to create an **offer to the local population of each place**, to ensure that in that place everyone is able to:

- access clear advice on **staying well**;
- access a range of **preventative services**;
- access **simple, joined-up care and treatment** when they need it;
- access digital services (with non-digital alternatives) that put the citizen at the heart of their own care;
- access proactive support to keep as well as possible, where they are **vulnerable or at high risk**; and to
- expect the NHS, through its employment, training, procurement and volunteering activities, and as a major estate owner to play a full part in **social and economic development** and **environmental sustainability**.

1.16. This offer will be met through providers of primary care, community health and mental health services, social care and support, community diagnostics and urgent and emergency care working together with meaningful delegated budgets to join up services. It will also allow important links to be made to other public or voluntary services that have a big impact on residents' day-to-day health, such as by improving local skills and employment or by ensuring high-quality housing.

1.17. Delivery will be through NHS providers, local government, primary care and the voluntary sector working together in each place in ICSs, built around primary care networks (PCNs) in neighbourhoods.

## Developing provider collaboration at scale



1.18. At some times, many people will have more complex or acute needs, requiring specialist expertise which can only be planned and organised effectively over a larger area than 'place'. This may be because concentrating skills and resources in bigger sites improves quality or reduces waiting times; because it is harder to predict what smaller populations will need; or because scale working can make better use of public resources.

1.19. Because of this, some services such as hospital, specialist mental health and ambulance need to be organised through **provider collaboration** that operates at a whole-ICS footprint – or more widely where required.

1.20. We want to create an **offer that all people served by an ICS** are able to:

- access a full range of high-quality acute hospital, mental health and ambulance services; and
- experience fair access to these services, based on need and not factors such as geography, race or socio-economic background.



1.21. We also need to harness the involvement, ownership and innovation of clinicians, working together to design more integrated patient pathways horizontally across providers and vertically within local place-based partnerships.

## 2. Putting this into practice

- 2.1. There are many good examples of recent system working that have improved outcomes and productivity, and helped to address inequalities. But COVID has made the case for a step up in scope and ambition. The NHS and local government are increasingly pressing for a more driven and comprehensive roll-out of system working.
- 2.2. So, in this section we set out a series of practical changes which will need to be in place by April 2022 at the latest, to make a consistent transition to system working focused on further devolution to systems, greater partnership working at place and closer collaboration between providers on a larger footprint. The main themes are:
  1. Provider collaboratives
  2. Place-based partnerships
  3. Clinical and professional leadership
  4. Governance and accountability
  5. Financial framework
  6. Data and digital
  7. Regulation and oversight
  8. How commissioning will change
- 2.3. We will support preparatory work during 2021/22 with further guidance for systems and in the NHS Operational Planning Guidance for 2021/22.

### Provider collaboratives

- 2.4. Provider organisations will play an **active and strong leadership role** in systems. Through their mandated representation in ICS leadership and decision-making, they will help to set system priorities and allocate resources.
- 2.5. **Providers will join up services across systems.** Many of the challenges that systems face cannot be solved by any one organisation, or by any one provider. Joining up the provision of services will happen in two main ways:
  - **within places** (for example between primary, community, local acute, and social care, or within and between primary care networks) through place-based partnerships as described above ('vertical integration'); and

- **between places** at scale where similar types of provider organisation share common goals such as reducing unwarranted variation, transforming services or providing mutual aid through a formal provider collaborative arrangement ('horizontal integration' – for example, through an alliance or a mental health provider collaborative).

- 2.6. **All NHS provider trusts will be expected to be part of a provider collaborative.** These will vary in scale and scope, but all providers must be able to take on responsibility for acting in the interests of the population served by their respective system(s) by entering into one or more formal collaboratives to work with their partners on specific functions.
- 2.7. This greater co-ordination between providers at scale can support:
- higher quality and more sustainable services;
  - reduction of unwarranted variation in clinical practice and outcomes;
  - reduction of health inequalities, with fair and equal access across sites;
  - better workforce planning; and
  - more effective use of resources, including clinical support and corporate services.
- 2.8. For provider organisations operating across a large footprint or for those working with smaller systems, they are likely to create **provider collaboratives that span multiple systems** to provide an effective scale to carry out their role.
- 2.9. For ambulance trusts specifically we would expect collaboration and integration at the right scale to take place. This should operate at scale to plan resources and join up with specialist providers, and at a more local level in places where focused on the delivery and redesign with other partners of urgent and emergency care pathways.
- 2.10. We want to spread and build on good work of this type already under way. The partnerships that support this collaboration (such as provider alliances) often take place on a different footprint to ICS boundaries. This should continue where clinically appropriate, with NHS England and NHS Improvement helping to ensure consistent and coherent approaches across systems, especially for smaller partnerships.
- 2.11. Local flexibility will be important but providers in every system, through partnership or any new collaborative arrangements, must be able to:
- deliver relevant programmes on behalf of all partners in the system;

- agree proposals developed by clinical and operational networks, and implement resulting changes (such as implementing standard operating procedures to support agreed practice; designating services to ensure their sustainability; or wider service reconfiguration);
- challenge and hold each other to account through agreed systems, processes and ways of working, e.g. an open-book approach to finances/planning;
- enact mutual aid arrangements to enhance resilience, for example by collectively managing waiting lists across the system.

2.12. In some systems, larger providers may also choose to use their scale to host functions on behalf of other system partners.

2.13. NHS England and NHS Improvement will set out further guidance in early 2021, describing a number of potential models for provider collaboratives, based on those that have been established in some parts of the country, including looser federations and more consolidated forms.

2.14. We know that providers are already making progress towards effective, collaborative working arrangements despite the constraints of relevant legislation and frameworks. Indeed, many crucial features of strong system working – such as trust between partners, good leadership and effective ways of working – cannot be legislated for.

But we recognise that these could be supported by changes to legislation, including the introduction of a ‘triple aim’ duty for all NHS providers to help align priorities, and the establishment of ICSs as statutory bodies with the capacity to support population-based decision-making and to direct resources to improve service provision. Our recommendations for this are set out in part 3.

2.15. Systems will continue to play an increasingly important role in developing multidisciplinary leadership and talent, coordinating approaches to recruiting, retaining and looking after staff, developing an agile workforce and making best use of individual staff skills, experience and contribution.

2.16. From April 2022, this will include:

- developing and supporting a ‘one workforce’ strategy in line with the NHS People Plan and the People Promise, to improve the experience of working in the NHS for everyone;
- contributing to a vibrant local labour market, with support from partner organisations and other major local employers, including the care home sector and education and skills providers;

- enabling employees to have rewarding career pathways that span the entire system, by creating employment models, workforce sharing arrangements and passporting or accreditation systems that enable their workforce to be deployed at different sites and organisations across (and beyond) the system, and sharing practical tools to support agile and flexible working;
- valuing diversity and developing a workforce and leadership which is representative of the population it serves; and
- supporting organisational and leadership development at all levels, including talent management. This should encompass investment in, and the development of, improvement expertise.

## Place-based partnerships

- 2.17. In many places, there are already **strong and effective place-based partnerships** between sectors. Every area is different, but common characteristics of the most successful are the full involvement of all partners who contribute to the place's health and care; an important role for local councils (often through joint appointments or shared budgets); a leading role for clinical primary care leaders through primary care networks; and a clear, strategic relationship with health and wellbeing boards.
- 2.18. The place leader on behalf of the NHS, as set out above, will work with partners such as the local authority and voluntary sector in an inclusive, transparent and collaborative way. They will have four main roles:
- to support and develop primary care networks (PCNs) which join up primary and community services across local neighbourhoods;
  - to simplify, modernise and join up health and care (including through technology and by joining up primary and secondary care where appropriate);
  - to understand and identify – using population health management techniques and other intelligence – people and families at risk of being left behind and to organise proactive support for them; and
  - to coordinate the local contribution to health, social and economic development to prevent future risks to ill-health within different population groups.
- 2.19. Systems should ensure that each place has **appropriate resources, autonomy and decision-making capabilities** to discharge these roles effectively, within a clear but flexible accountability framework that enables collaboration around funding and financial accountability, commissioning and risk management. This could include places taking on delegated budgets.

- 2.20. Partnerships within local places are important. Primary care networks in neighbourhoods and thriving community networks are also provider collaboratives, and for integration to be successful we will need primary care working with community, mental health, the voluntary sector and social care as close to where people live as possible.
- 2.21. The exact division of responsibilities between system and place should be based on the principle of subsidiarity – with the system taking responsibility only for things where there is a clear need to work on a larger footprint, as agreed with local places.

## The NHS's offer to local government

- 2.22. We will work much more closely with local government and the voluntary sector at place, to ensure local priorities for improved health and care outcomes are met by the NHS becoming a more effective partner in the planning, design and delivery of care. This will ensure residents feel well supported, with their needs clearly understood; and with services designed and delivered in the most effective and efficient way for each place.
- 2.23. As ICSs are established and evolve, this will create opportunities to further strengthen partnership working between local government, the NHS, public health and social care. Where partnership working is truly embedded and matured, the ability to accelerate place-based arrangements for local decision-making and use of available resources, such as delegated functions and funding, maximises the collective impact that can be achieved for the benefit of residents and communities.

## Clinical and professional leadership

- 2.24. Clinical and other frontline staff have led the way in working across professional and institutional boundaries, and they need to be supported to continue to play a significant leadership role through systems. ICSs should embed **system-wide clinical and professional leadership** through their partnership board and other governance arrangements, including **primary care network** representation.
- 2.25. **Primary care clinical leadership** takes place through critical leadership roles including:
- Clinical directors, general practitioners and other clinicians and professionals in primary care networks (PCNs), who build partnerships in **neighbourhoods** spanning general practice, community and mental health care, social care, pharmacy, dentistry, optometry and the voluntary sector.

- Clinical leaders representing primary care in **place-based partnerships** that bring together the primary care provider leadership role in federations and group models.
- A primary care perspective at system level.

2.26. **Specialist clinical leadership** across secondary and tertiary services must also be embedded in systems. Existing **clinical networks** at system, regional and national level have important roles advising on the most appropriate models and standards of care, in particular making decisions about clinical pathways and clinically-led service change. System-wide clinical leadership at an ICS and provider collaborative footprint through clinical networks should:

- be able to carry out clinical service strategy reviews on behalf of the ICS;
- develop proposals and recommendations that can be discussed and agreed at wider decision-making forums; and
- include colleagues from different professional backgrounds and from different settings across primary care, acute, community and mental health care.

2.27. **Wider clinical and professional leadership** should also ensure a strong voice for the wide range of skills and experience across systems. From nursing to social care, from allied health professionals to high street dentists, optometrists and pharmacists, and the full range of specialisms and care settings, people should receive services designed and organised to reflect the expertise of those who provide their care.

## Governance and public accountability

2.28. Systems have told us from recent experience that good partnership working must be underpinned by mutually-agreed governance arrangements, clear collective decision-making processes and transparent information-sharing.

2.29. In the *NHS Long Term Plan* and [NHS planning and contracting guidance for 2020/21](#), we described a set of consistent operating arrangements that all systems should put in place by 2021/22. These included:

- system-wide governance arrangements (including a system partnership board with NHS, local councils and other partners represented) to enable a collective model of responsibility and decision-making;
- quality governance arrangements, notably a quality lead and quality group in systems, focused on assurance, planning and improvement;

- a leadership model for the system, including an ICS leader with sufficient capacity and a chair appointed in line with NHSEI guidance; and
- agreed ways of working with respect to financial governance and collaboration.

2.30. ICSs now need to put in place firmer governance and decision-making arrangements for 2021/22, to reflect their growing roles and responsibilities. With the below consistent framework, these should be flexible to match local needs.

2.31. As part of this, each system should define:

- **‘place’ leadership** arrangements. These should consistently involve:
  - i. every locally determined ‘place’ in the system operating a partnership with joined-up decision-making arrangements for defined functions;
  - ii. the partnership involving, at a minimum, primary care provider leadership, local authorities, including Director of Public Health and providers of community and mental health services and Healthwatch;
  - iii. agreed joint decision-making arrangements with local government; and
  - iv. representation on the ICS board.

They may flexibly define:

- i. the configuration, size and boundaries of places which should reflect meaningful communities and scale for the responsibilities of the place partnership;
  - ii. additional membership of each place partnership that is likely to include acute providers, ambulance trusts, the voluntary sector and other partners;
  - iii. the precise governance and decision-making arrangements that exist within each place; and
  - iv. their voting arrangements on the ICS board.
- **provider collaborative leadership** arrangements for providers of more specialist services in acute and mental health care. These should consistently involve:
    - i. every such provider in a system operating as part of one or more agreed provider collaboratives with joined up decision-making arrangements for defined functions; and
    - ii. provider collaboratives represented on the appropriate ICS board(s).



They may flexibly define:

- i. the scale and scope of provider collaboratives. For smaller systems, provider collaboratives are likely to span multiple systems and to be represented on the board of each. These arrangements should reflect a meaningful scale for their responsibilities;
  - ii. the precise membership of each collaborative (acute providers, specialist providers, ambulance trusts at an appropriate footprint, mental health providers);
  - iii. the precise governance and decision-making arrangements that exist within each collaborative; and
  - iv. their voting arrangements on the ICS board.
- **individual organisation** accountability within the system governance framework. This will consistently involve:
    - i. the responsibility and accountability of the individual provider organisations for their current range of formal and statutory responsibilities (which are unchanged); and
    - ii. the accountability relationship between the provider organisation and all place-based partnerships and provider collaboratives of which it is a member.

It may flexibly define:

- iii. Any lead provider responsibility that the organisation holds on behalf of a place partnership or a provider collaborative.

2.32. Integrated care systems draw their strength from the effectiveness of their constituent parts. Their governance should seek to minimise levels of decision-making and should set out defined responsibilities of organisations, partnerships at place, provider collaboratives and the core ICS role. Each ICS should seek to ensure that all the relevant bodies feel ownership and involvement in the ICS.

2.33. The local test for these governance arrangements is whether they enable joined-up work around a shared purpose. Provider collaboratives and place-based partnerships should enable peer support and constructive challenge between partners delivering services and accelerate partners' collective ability to improve services in line with agreed priorities.

2.34. The greater development of working at place will in many areas provide an opportunity to align decision-making with local government, including integrated commissioning arrangements for health and social care, and local responsiveness through health and wellbeing boards. There is no one way to do this, but all systems should consider how the devolution of functions and capabilities to systems and places can be supported by robust governance arrangements.

- 2.35. ICS governance is currently based on voluntary arrangements and is therefore dependent on goodwill and mutual co-operation. There are also legal constraints on the ability of organisations in an ICS to make decisions jointly. We have previously made a number of recommendations for legislative change to Government and Parliament to increase flexibility in decision-making by enabling decision-making joint committees of both commissioners and providers and also committees of Providers. Section 3 of this document captures these options and also describes our thinking on clarifying arrangements for an ICS.
- 2.36. Many systems have shown great ways to involve and take account of the views and priorities of local residents and those who use services, as a 'golden thread' running through everything they do. During 21/22, every ICS should work to develop systematic arrangements to involve lay and resident voices and the voluntary sector in its governance structures, building on the collective expertise of partners and making use of pre-existing assets and forums such as Healthwatch and citizens' panels.
- 2.37. In particular, governance in ICSs should involve all system partners in the development of service change proposals, and in consulting and engaging with local people and relevant parts of local government (such as with overview and scrutiny committees and wider elected members) on these. It should appropriately involve elected councillors, and other local politicians such as metro mayors where relevant, and reflect transparency in wider decision-making.
- 2.38. Each system should also be able to show how it uses public involvement and insight to inform decision-making, using tools such as citizens' panels, local health champions, and co-production with people with lived experience. Systems should make particular efforts to understand and talk to people who have historically been excluded.

## Financial framework

- 2.39. In order that the collective leadership of each ICS has the best possible opportunity to invest in and deliver joined-up, more preventative care, tailored to local people's needs, we will increasingly **organise the finances of the NHS at ICS level** and put **allocative decisions in the hands of local leaders**. We are clear that we want ICSs to be key bodies for financial accountability and financial governance arrangements will need to reflect that. NHSEI will update guidance to reflect these changes.
- 2.40. That means that we will **create a 'single pot'** which brings together current CCG commissioning budgets, primary care budgets, the majority of specialised commissioning spend, the budgets for certain other directly commissioned services, central support or sustainability funding and nationally-held transformation funding that is allocated to systems.

- 2.41. ICS leaders, working with provider collaboratives, must have the freedom – and indeed the duty – to distribute those resources in line with national rules such as the mental health, and the primary and community services investment guarantees and locally-agreed strategies for health and care, for example targeting investment in line with locally-agreed health inequalities priorities, or responding flexibly as new, more preventative services are developed and patient journeys change.
- 2.42. ICS leaders will also have a duty to ensure that they deploy the resources available to them in order to protect the future sustainability of local services, and to ensure that their health and care system consumes their fair share of resources allocated to it.
- 2.43. It also means that ICS leaders will be expected to use new freedoms to delegate significant budgets to ‘place’ level, which might include resources for general practice, other primary care, community services, and continuing healthcare. Similarly, through active involvement at place level, providers will have a greater say in how transformation funding is deployed. Decisions about the use of all of these budgets will usually be made at the lowest possible level, closest to those communities they serve and in partnership with their local authority. New powers will make it easier to form joint budgets with the local authority, including for public health functions.
- 2.44. Providers will through their role in ICS leadership have the opportunity to shape the strategic health and care priorities for the populations they serve, and new opportunities – whether through lead provider models at place level or through fully-fledged integrated care provider contractual models – to determine how services are funded and delivered, and how different bodies involved in providing joined-up care work together.
- 2.45. We will deliver on the commitment set out in the Long Term Plan to mostly move away from episodic or activity-based payment, rolling out the blended payment model for secondary care services. This will ensure that provider collaboratives have greater certainty about the resources available to them to run certain groups of services and meet the needs of particular patient groups. Any variable payments will be funded within the ICS financial envelope, targeted to support the delivery of locally-identified priorities and increasingly linked to quality and outcomes metrics. Each ICS will be expected to agree and codify how financial risk will be managed across places and between provider collaboratives.
- 2.46. These changes will reduce the administrative, transactional costs of the current approach to commissioning and paying for care, and release resources for the front line - including preventative measures - that can be invested in services that are planned, designed and delivered in a more strategic way at ICS level. This is just one way in which we will ensure that

each ICS has the capacity and capability to take advantage of the opportunities that these new approaches offer.

- 2.47. Finally, we will further embed reforms to the capital regime introduced in 2019/20 and 2020/21, bringing together at ICS level responsibility for allocating capital envelopes with responsibility for allocating the revenue budgets which fund day-to-day services. This will ensure that capital investment strategies:
- are not only coordinated between different NHS providers, but also aligned with local authorities' management of their estates and wider assets;
  - reflect local judgments about the balance between competing priorities for capital expenditure; and
  - give priority to those investments which support the future sustainability of local services for future generations.
- 2.48. We will set out in the 2021/22 planning guidance how we will support ICSs to begin operating more collective financial governance in 2021/22 and to prepare for the powers and duties set out above.

## Data and Digital

- 2.49. Data and digital technology have played a vital role helping the NHS and care respond to the pandemic. They will be at the heart of creating effective local systems, helping local partners in health and social care work together. They can help improve productivity and patient outcomes, reduce bureaucracy, drive service transformation and stimulate improvement and research.
- 2.50. But digital maturity and data quality is variable across health and care. Data has too often been held in siloes, meaning that clinicians and care professionals do not have easy access to all of the information that could be useful in caring for their patients and service users.
- 2.51. To fulfil the potential of digital and data to improve patient outcomes and drive collaborative working, systems will need to:
- (1) build smart digital and data foundations
  - (2) connect health and care services
  - (3) use digital and data to transform care
  - (4) put the citizen at the centre of their care

## Build smart digital and data foundations

- Have clear **board accountability** for data and digital, including a member of the ICS Partnership Board being a named SRO.
- Have a system-wide **digital transformation plan**. This should outline the three-year journey to digitally-driven, citizen-centred care, and the benefits that digital and data will realise for the system and its citizens.
- Build the **digital and data literacy** of the whole workforce as well as specific digital skills such as user research and service design.
- Invest in the **infrastructure** needed to deliver on the transformation plan. This will include **shared contracts and platforms** to increase resiliency, digitise operational services and create efficiencies, from shared data centres to common electronic patient records (EPRs).

## Connect health and care services

- Develop or join a **shared care record** joining data safely across all health and social care settings, both to improve direct care for individual patients and service users, and to underpin population health and effective system management.
- Build the tools to allow **collaborative working** and frictionless movement of staff across organisational boundaries, including shared booking and referral management, task sharing, radiology reporting and pathology networks.
- Follow **nationally defined standards** for digital and data to enable integration and interoperability, including in the data architecture and design.

## Use digital and data to transform care

- Use digital technology to **reimagine care pathways**, joining up care across boundaries and improving outcomes.
- Develop shared **cross-system intelligence and analytical functions** that use information to improve decision-making at every level, including:
  - actionable insight for frontline teams;
  - near-real time actionable intelligence and robust data (financial, performance, quality, outcomes);
  - system-wide workforce, finance, quality and performance planning; and

- the capacity and skills needed for population health management.
- Ensure **transparency of information** about interventions and the outcomes they produce, to drive more responsive coordination of services, better decision-making and improved research.

### Put the citizen at the centre of their care

- Develop a road map for **citizen-centred digital channels** and services, including access to personalised advice on staying well, access to their own data, and triage to appropriate health and care services.
- Roll out **remote monitoring** to allow citizens to stay safe at home for longer, using digital tools to help them manage long-term conditions.
- We want to build on the experience of data sharing during COVID so that data is shared, wherever it can and should be. This will inform the upcoming Department of Health and Social Care Data Strategy. While this will be mainly about embedding a culture of sharing data with appropriate safeguards, we would support legislative change that clarifies that sharing data for the benefit of the whole health and care system is a key duty and responsibility of all health and adult social care organisations. This will require a more flexible legislative framework than currently exists to support further evolution and empower local systems to lead and drive that agenda.

## Regulation and oversight

- 2.52. We have consistently heard that regulation needs to adapt, with more support from national regulators for systems as well as the individual organisations within them, and a shift in emphasis to reflect the importance of partnership working to improve population health.
- 2.53. Regulation best supports our ambitions where it enables systems and the organisations within them to make change happen. This means a focus on how effective local arrangements are at implementing better pathways, maximising use of collective capacity and resources, and acting in partnership to achieve joint financial and performance standards.
- 2.54. We have already taken steps to bring together NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide a single, clear voice to the system and our legislative proposals haven't changed – this merger should be formalised in future legislation.
- 2.55. As a formally merged body, NHS England will of course remain answerable to Parliament and to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care for NHS performance, finance and healthcare transformation. There will need to

be appropriate mechanisms in law to ensure that the newly merged body is responsive and accountable. We envisage Parliament using the legislation to specify the Secretary of State's legal powers of direction in respect of NHS England in a transparent way that nevertheless protects clinical and operational independence.

- 2.56. There are a further practical steps that we can take to support systems:
- working with the CQC to seek to embed a requirement for strong participation in ICS and provider collaborative arrangements in the “Well Led” assessment;
  - issuing guidance under the NHS provider licence that good governance for NHS providers includes a duty to collaborate; and
  - ensuring foundation trust directors' and governors' duties to the public support system working.
- 2.57. We expect to see greater adoption of system- and place- level measurements, which might include reporting some performance data such as patient treatment lists at system level. Next year, we will introduce new measures and metrics to support this, including an ‘integration index’ for use by all systems.
- 2.58. The future **System Oversight Framework** will set consistent expectations of systems and their constituent organisations and match accountability for results with improvement support, as appropriate.
- 2.59. This approach will recognise the enhanced role of systems. It will identify where ICSs and organisations may benefit from, or require, support to help them meet standards in a sustainable way and will provide an objective basis for decisions about when and how NHSEI will intervene in cases where there are serious problems or risks.

The proposed future Intensive Recovery Support Programme will give support to the most challenged systems (in terms of quality and/or finance) to tackle their key challenges. This will enable intervention in response to CQC findings or where other regulatory action is required. This approach enables improvement action and targeted support either at organisation/provider level (with system support) or across a whole system where required and may extend across health and social care, accessing shared learning and good practice between systems to drive improvement.

- 2.60. Greater collaboration will help us to be more effective at designing and distributing services across a local system, in line with agreed health and care priorities and within the resources available. However there remains an important role for patient choice, including choice between qualified providers, providers outside the geographic bounds of the system and choice

of the way in which services need to be joined up around the individual person as a resident or patient including through personal health budgets.

- 2.61. Our previous recommendations to Government for legislation include rebalancing the focus on competition between NHS organisations by reducing the Competition and Market Authority's role in the NHS and abolishing Monitor's role and functions in relation to enforcing competition. We also recommended regulations made under section 75 of the *Health and Social Care Act 2012* should be revoked and that the powers in primary legislation under which they are made should be repealed, and that NHS services be removed from the scope of the *Public Contracts Regulations 2015*. We have committed to engage openly on how the future procurement regime will operate subject to legislation being brought before Parliament.

## How commissioning will change

- 2.62. Local leaders have repeatedly told us that the commissioning functions currently carried out by CCGs need to become more strategic, with a clearer focus on **population-level health outcomes** and a marked reduction in transactional and contractual exchanges within a system. This significant change of emphasis for commissioning functions means that the organisational form of CCGs will need to evolve.
- 2.63. The activities, capacity and resources for commissioning will change in three significant ways in the future, building on the experience of the most mature systems:
- Ensuring a single, system-wide approach to undertake **strategic commissioning**. This will discharge core ICS functions, which include:
    - assessing population health needs and planning and modelling demographic, service use and workforce changes over time;
    - planning and prioritising how to address those needs, improving all residents' health and tackling inequalities; and
    - ensuring that these priorities are funded to provide good value and health outcomes.
  - Service transformation and pathway redesign need to be done differently. Provider organisations and others, through partnerships at place and in provider collaboratives, become a principal engine of transformation and should agree the future service model and structure of provision jointly through ICS governance (involving transparency and public accountability). Clinical leadership will remain a crucial part of this at all footprints.



- The greater focus on population health and outcomes in contracts and the collective system ownership of the financial envelope is a chance to apply capacity and skills in transactional commissioning and contracting with a new focus. Analytical skills within systems should be applied to better understanding how best to use resources to improving outcomes, rather than managing contract performance between organisations.

- 2.64. Many commissioning functions are now **coterminous with ICS boundaries**, and this will need to be consistent across the country before April 2022. Under the legislative provisions recommended in section 3, current CCG functions would subsequently be absorbed to become core ICS business.
- 2.65. However, with the spread of place-based partnerships backed by devolved funding, simplified accountability, and an approach to governance appropriate to local circumstances along with further devolution of specialised commissioning activity, there will be flexibility for local areas to make full use of the local relationships and expertise currently residing in CCGs.
- 2.66. Systems should also agree whether individual functions are best delivered at system or at place, balancing subsidiarity with the benefits of scale working. Commissioners may, for example, work at place to complete service and outcomes reviews, allocate resources and undertake needs assessments alongside local authorities. But larger ICSs may prefer to carry out a wider range of functions in their larger places, and smaller ones to do more across the whole system.
- 2.67. Commissioning support units (CSUs) operate within the NHS family across England, providing services that have been independently evaluated for quality and value for money. We expect that CSUs will continue to develop as trusted delivery partners to ICSs, providing economies of scale which may include joining up with provider back office functions where appropriate and helping to shape services through a customer board arrangement.

## Specialised commissioning

- 2.68. Specialised services are particularly important for the public and patients, with the NHS often working at the limits of science to bring the highest levels of human knowledge and skill to save lives and improve health.
- 2.69. The national commissioning arrangements that have been in place for these services since 2013 have played a vital role in supporting **consistent, equitable and fast access for patients** to an ever-expanding catalogue of cutting edge technologies - genomic testing, CAR-T therapy, mechanical thrombectomy, Proton Beam Therapy and CFTR modulator therapies for patients with cystic fibrosis to name just a few.

2.70. But these national commissioning arrangements can sometime mean fragmented care pathways, misaligned incentives and missed opportunities for **upstream investment and preventative intervention**. For example, the split in commissioning responsibilities for mental health services has potentially slowed the ambition to reduce the number of children admitted for inpatient treatment and, where they are admitted, making sure they are as close to home as possible. Bringing together the commissioning of mental health services has aligned incentives and enabled resources to be moved into upstream services, reducing over-reliance on geographically distant inpatient care.

2.71. Integrated care systems provide an opportunity to further **align the design, development and provision of specialised services with linked care** pathways, where it supports patient care, while maintaining consistent national standards and access policies across the board.

2.72. The following principles will underpin the detailed development of the proposed arrangements:

- ***Principle One: All specialised services, as prescribed in regulations, will continue to be subject to consistent national service specifications and evidence-based policies determining treatment eligibility.*** NHS England will continue to have responsibility for developing and setting these standards nationally and whoever is designated as the strategic commissioner will be expected to follow them. Over time, service specifications will need to become more outcomes-focused to ensure that innovative and flexible solutions to unique system circumstances and/or opportunities can be easily adopted. But policies determining eligibility criteria for specific treatments across all specialised services will remain precise and consistently applied across the country.
- ***Principle Two: Strategic commissioning, decision-making and accountability for specialised services will be led and integrated at the appropriate population level: ICS, multi-ICS or national.*** For certain specialised services, it will make sense to plan, organise and commission these at ICS level. For others, ICSs will need to come together across a larger geographic footprint to jointly plan and take joint commissioning decisions. And many services, such as those in the highly specialised services portfolio, will continue to be planned and commissioned on a national footprint. Importantly, whichever level strategic commissioning occurs, the national standards will apply.
- ***Principle Three: Clinical networks and provider collaborations will drive quality improvement, service change and transformation across specialised services and non-specialised services.*** Clinical networks have long been a feature of the NHS. But during the COVID

pandemic they have become critical in supporting innovation and system wide collaboration. Looking ahead they will be supported to drive clinically-led change and service improvement with even greater accountability for tackling inequalities and for improving population health.

- ***Principle Four: Funding of specialised services will shift from provider-based allocations to population-based budgets, supporting the connection of services back to 'place'.*** We are considering from April 2021 allocating budgets on a population basis at regional level and are considering the best basis for allocating funding and will provide further information in due course. In this first year, adjustments will then be made to neutralise any changes in financial flows and ensure stability. We intend to publish a needs-based allocation formula, before using it to inform allocations against an agreed pace of change in future years. A needs-based allocations formula will further strengthen the focus on tackling inequalities and unwarranted variation.

# 3. Legislative proposals

- 3.1. The detailed policy work described above will be necessary to deliver our vision but will not by itself be sufficient. While legislation is only part of the answer, the existing legislation (*the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012*) does not present a sufficiently firm foundation for system working.
- 3.2. In September 2019, NHSEI made a number of recommendations for an NHS Bill<sup>2</sup>. These aimed to remove current legislative barriers to integration across health and social care bodies, foster collaboration, and more formally join up national leadership in support of the ambitions outlined above.
- 3.3. Recommendations included:
  - rebalancing the focus on **competition** between NHS organisations by reducing the Competition and Markets Authority’s role in the NHS and abolishing Monitor’s role and functions in relation to enforcing competition;
  - simplifying **procurement** rules by scrapping section 75 of the 2012 Act and removing the commissioning of NHS healthcare services from the jurisdiction of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015;
  - providing increased flexibilities on **tariff**;
  - reintroducing the ability to establish **new NHS trusts** to support the creation of integrated care providers;
  - ensuring a more coordinated approach to planning **capital investment**, through the possibility of introducing FT capital spend limits;
  - the ability to establish decision-making **joint committees** of commissioners and NHS providers and between NHS providers;
  - enabling **collaborative commissioning** between NHS bodies – it is currently easier in legislative terms for NHS bodies and local authorities to work together than NHS bodies;
  - a new “**triple aim**” duty for all NHS organisations of ‘better health for the whole population, better quality care for all patients and financially sustainable services for the taxpayer; and

<sup>2</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875711/The\\_government\\_s\\_2020-2021\\_mandate\\_to\\_NHS\\_England\\_and\\_NHS\\_Improvement.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875711/The_government_s_2020-2021_mandate_to_NHS_England_and_NHS_Improvement.pdf)

- **merging NHS England and NHS Improvement** – formalising the work already done to bring the organisations together.

- 3.4. These recommendations were strongly supported and backed across the health and social care sector<sup>3</sup>. We believe these proposals still stand.
- 3.5. One of the key considerations in our recommendations was how, and to what extent, ICSs should be put on a statutory footing. Responses to our engagement were ultimately mixed – balancing the relatively early stage of development of some ICSs against a desire to enable further progress and to put ICSs on a firmer footing.
- 3.6. At the time, we proposed a new statutory underpinning to establish ICS boards through voluntary joint committees, an entity through which members could delegate their organisational functions to its members to take a collective decision. This approach ensured support to those systems working collectively already and a future approach to those systems at an earlier stage of development.
- 3.7. Many respondents to our engagement and specifically Parliament’s Health and Social Care Select Committee raised a number of questions as to whether a voluntary approach would be effective in driving system working. There was particular focus on those areas at an earlier stage of their development and whether a voluntary model offered sufficient clarity of accountability for health outcomes and financial balance both to parliament and more directly to the public.
- 3.8. The response of the NHS and its partners to COVID-19 and a further year of ICS development has increased the appetite for statutory “clarity” for ICSs and the organisations within them. With an NHS Bill included in the last Queen’s Speech, we believe the opportunity is now to achieve clarity and establish a “future-proofed” legislative basis for ICSs that accelerates their ability to deliver our vision for integrated care.
- 3.9. We believe there are two possible options for enshrining ICSs in legislation, without triggering a distracting top-down re-organisation:

**Option 1: a statutory committee** model with an Accountable Officer that binds together current statutory organisations.

**Option 2: a statutory corporate NHS body** model that additionally brings CCG statutory functions into the ICS.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.aomrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/190926\\_Support\\_letter\\_NHS\\_legislation\\_-\\_proposals.pdf](https://www.aomrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/190926_Support_letter_NHS_legislation_-_proposals.pdf)

3.10. Both models share a number of features – broad membership and joint decision-making (including, as a minimum, representatives from commissioners; acute, community and primary care providers; and local authorities); responsibility for owning and driving forward the system plan; operating within and in accordance with the triple aim duty; and a lead role in relating to the centre.

### **Option 1 – a statutory ICS Board/ Joint Committee with an Accountable Officer**

3.11. This option is closer to our original proposal. It would establish a mandatory, rather than voluntary, statutory ICS Board through the mechanism of a joint committee and enable NHS commissioners, providers and local authorities to take decisions collectively.

3.12. Unlike previously proposed versions of this model it would have a system Accountable Officer, chosen from the CEOs/AOs of the Board's mandatory members. This Accountable Officer would not replace individual organisation AOs/CEOs but would be recognised in legislation and would have duties in relation to delivery of the Board's functions. There would be a duty for the Board to agree and deliver a system plan and all members would have an explicit duty to comply with it.

3.13. In accordance with our stated ambition, there would be one aligned CCG only per ICS footprint under this model, and new powers would allow that CCGs are able to delegate many of its population health functions to providers.

3.14. This option retains individual organisational duties and autonomy and relies upon collective responsibility. Intervention against individual NHS organisations (not working in the best interests of the system) would continue to be enhanced through the new triple aim duty and a new duty to comply with the ICS plan.

3.15. The new Accountable Officer role would have duties to seek to agree the system plan and seek to ensure it is delivered and to some extent offer clarity of leadership. However, current accountability structures for CCG and providers would remain.

3.16. There remain potential downsides to this model. In effect, many of the questions raised through our engagement in 2019 about accountability and clarity of leadership would remain. While the addition of an Accountable Officer strengthens this model, there remains less obvious responsibility for patient outcomes or financial matters. Having an ICS Accountable Officer alongside a CCG Accountable Officer may in some cases confuse rather than clarify accountability. The CCG governing body and GP membership is

also retained, and it is questionable whether these are sufficiently diverse arrangements to fulfil the different role required of CCGs in ICSs.

- 3.17. Furthermore, many may not consider this model to be the “end state” for ICSs and opportunities for primary legislative change are relatively rare. There are therefore strong arguments to go further when considering how the health and care system might evolve over the next ten years and more.

## Option 2 – a statutory ICS body

- 3.18. In this option, ICSs would be established as NHS bodies partly by “re-purposing” CCGs and would – among other duties – take on the commissioning functions of CCGs. Additional functions would be conferred and existing functions modified to produce a new framework of duties and powers.
- 3.19. The CCG governing body and GP membership model would be replaced by a board consisting of representatives from the system partners. As a minimum it would include representatives of NHS providers, primary care and local government alongside a Chair, a Chief Executive and a Chief Financial Officer. The ICS body should be able to appoint such other members as it deems appropriate allowing for maximum flexibility for systems to shape their membership to suit the needs of their populations. The power of individual organisational veto would be removed. The ICS Chief Executive would be a full-time Accounting Officer role, which would help strengthen lines of accountability and be a key leadership role in ensuring the system delivers.
- 3.20. The ICS’s primary duty would be to secure the effective provision of health services to meet the needs of the system population, working in collaboration with partner organisations. It would have the flexibility to make arrangements with providers through contracts or by delegating responsibility for arranging specified services to one or more providers.
- 3.21. This model would deliver a clearer structure for an ICS and avoids the risk of complicated workarounds to deliver our vision for ICSs. Although there would be a representative for primary care on the Board, there would no longer be a conflict of interests with the current GP-led CCG model (created by the 2012 Act) and it could be possible to allocate combined population-level primary care, community health services and specialised services population budgets to the ICS.
- 3.22. Many commissioning functions for which NHSE is currently responsible could, for the most part, be transferred or delegated to the ICS body, but with the ability to form joint committees as proposed through our original recommendations, with NHSE, if and where appropriate.

3.23. Through greater provider involvement, it could also reduce some of the transactional burdens of the current contracting processes. There would be powers for the ICS to delegate responsibility for arranging some services to providers, to create much greater scope for provider collaboration to use whole-population budgets to drive care pathway transformation.

## Our approach

3.24. Either model would be sufficiently permissive in legislation to allow different systems to shape how they operate and how best and most appropriately they deliver patient care and outcomes support at place.

3.25. Under either model we would want local government to be an integral, key player in the ICS. Both models offer a basis for planning and shaping services across healthcare, social care, prevention and the wider determinants of health. Both would allow for the delegation of functions and money to place-based statutory committees involving NHS bodies and local government. Both would enable NHS and local government to exploit existing flexibilities to pool functions and funds.

3.26. While both models would drive increased system collaboration and achieve our vision and our aims for ICSs in the immediate term, we believe Option 2 is a model that offers greater long term clarity in terms of system leadership and accountability. It also provides a clearer statutory vehicle for deepening integration across health and local government over time. It also provides enhanced flexibility for systems to decide who and how best to deliver services by both taking on additional commissioning functions from NHS England but also deciding with system colleagues (providers and local councils) where and how best service provision should take place.

3.27. Should these proposals be developed further and proposed by Government as future legislation, we would expect a full assessment of the impact of these proposals on equalities and public and parliamentary engagement and scrutiny as is appropriate.

## Questions

**Q.** Do you agree that giving ICSs a statutory footing from 2022, alongside other legislative proposals, provides the right foundation for the NHS over the next decade?

**Q.** Do you agree that option 2 offers a model that provides greater incentive for collaboration alongside clarity of accountability across systems, to Parliament and most importantly, to patients?



**Q.** Do you agree that, other than mandatory participation of NHS bodies and Local Authorities, membership should be sufficiently permissive to allow systems to shape their own governance arrangements to best suit their populations needs?

**Q.** Do you agree, subject to appropriate safeguards and where appropriate, that services currently commissioned by NHSE should be either transferred or delegated to ICS bodies?

# 4. Implications and next steps

- 4.1. The ambitious changes set out here are founded on the conviction that collaboration will be a more effective mechanism for transformation against long term population health priorities and also for driving sustainable operational performance against the immediate challenges on quality, access, finance and delivery of outcomes that make a difference to people's experience of services today.
- 4.2. International evidence points to this being the case as across the world health systems change to pursue integration as the means of meeting health needs and improving health outcomes. We have seen this reinforced through our experiences in tackling COVID-19.
- 4.3. The rapid changes in digital technology adoption, mutual cooperation and capacity management, provision of joined up support to the most vulnerable that have been essential in the immediate response to the pandemic have only been possible through partners working together to implement rapid change as they focus on a shared purpose.
- 4.4. As we embed the ways of working set out above, partners in every system will be able to take more effective, immediate operational action on:
  - managing acute healthcare performance challenges and marshalling collective resource around clear priorities, through provider collaboratives;
  - tackling unwarranted variation in service quality, access and performance through transparent data with peer review and support arrangements organised by provider collaboratives;
  - using data to understand capacity utilisation across provider collaboratives, equalising access (tackling inequality across the system footprint) and equalising pressures on individual organisations.

## The NHS England and NHS Improvement's operating model

- 4.5. NHSEI will support systems to adopt improvement and learning methodologies and approaches which will enable them to improve services for patients, tackle unwarranted variation and develop cultures of continuous improvement.

- 4.6. This will be underpinned by a comprehensive support offer which includes:
- access to our national transformation programmes for outpatients and diagnostics;
  - support to tackle unwarranted variation and increase productivity (in partnership with the Getting it Right First Time programme);
  - the data they need to drive improvement, accessed through the 'model health system';
  - the resources and guidance that they need to build improvement capability; and
  - assistance from our emergency and electivity intensive support teams (dependent on need).
- 4.7. Much of this support offer will be made available to systems through regional improvement hubs, which will ensure that improvement resource supports local capacity- and capability-building. Systems will then be able to flexibly and rapidly deploy the support into place partnerships and provider collaboratives.
- 4.8. NHSEI developed a joint operating model during 2019, with input from senior NHS leaders including those in systems and regions, as well as frontline staff and other stakeholders. This resulted in a description of the different ways NHSEI will operate in future, underpinned by a set of principles including subsidiarity, and a set of 'levers of value' that NHSEI can use at national and regional level to support systems.
- 4.9. NHSEI will continue to develop this operating model to support the vision set out above, and any legislative changes. This will include further evolving how we interact with systems nationally and regionally; and ensuring that its functions are arranged in a way that support and embed system working to deliver our priorities.
- 4.10. The new operating environment will mean:
- increased freedoms and responsibilities for ICSs, including greater responsibility for system development and performance, as well as greater autonomy regarding assurance.
  - the primary interaction between NHSEI and systems will be between regions and the collective ICS leadership, with limited cause for national functions to directly intervene with individual providers within systems.
  - as systems take on whole population budgets, they will increasingly determine how resource is to be used to 'move the dial' on outcomes, inequalities, productivity and wider social and economic development

against their specific health challenges and population health priorities.

- NHSEI regional teams will become ‘thinner’ as we move direct commissioning responsibility out to systems (individually and collectively). They will increasingly continue to enable systems to take on greater autonomy, working with them to identify their individual development priorities and support needs.

## Transition

- 4.11. The experience of the earliest ICSs shows that great leadership is critical to success and can come from any part of the health and care system. But, to be effective, it must be felt right across, and draw on the talents of leaders from every part of, a system.
- 4.12. These systems have developed a new style of behaviour, which makes the most of the leadership teams of all constituent organisations and empowers frontline leaders. System leaders have impact through a collaborative and distributive leadership style that operates across boundaries, leading for communities.
- 4.13. This shared approach to leadership is based on qualities such as openness and transparency, honesty and integrity, a genuine belief in common goals and an ability to build consensus.
- 4.14. ICSs need to be of sufficient size to carry out their ‘at scale’ activities effectively, while having sufficiently strong links into local communities at a much more local level in places and neighbourhoods.
- 4.15. Pragmatically we are supporting ICSs through to April 2022 at their current size and scale, but we recognise that smaller systems will need to join up functions, particularly for provider collaboration. We will support the ability for ICSs to more formally combine as they take on new roles where this is supported locally.
- 4.16. We will work with systems to ensure that they have arrangements in place to take on enhanced roles from April 2022. We will set out a roadmap for this transition that gives assurance over system readiness for new functions as these become statutory.
- 4.17. We know that under either legislative proposal we need to ensure that we support our staff during organisational change by minimising uncertainty and limiting employment changes. We are therefore seeking to provide stability of employment while enabling a rapid development of role functions and purpose for all our teams, particularly in CCGs directly impacted by legislative Option 2.

- 4.18. We want to take a different approach to this transition; one that is characterised by care for our people and no distraction from the 'day job': the critical challenges of recovery and tackling population health.
- 4.19. **Stable employment:** As CCG functions move into new bodies we will make a 'continued employment promise' for staff carrying out commissioning functions. We will preserve terms and conditions to the new organisations (even if not required by law) to help provide stability and to remove uncertainty.
- 4.20. **New roles and functions:** For many commissioning functions the work will move to a new organisation and will then evolve over time to focus on system priorities and ways of working. The priority will be the continuation of the good work being carried out by the current group of staff and we will promote best practice in engaging, consulting and supporting the workforce during a carefully planned transition, minimising disruption to staff.
- 4.21. Other functions will be more directly impacted, principally the most senior leaders in CCGs (chief officers and other governing body / board members). ICSs need to have the right talent in roles leading in systems.
- 4.22. Our commitment is:
- not to make significant changes to roles below the most senior leadership roles;
  - to minimise impact of organisational change on current staff during both phases (in paragraphs 4.19 and 4.20 above) by focusing on continuation of existing good work through the transition and not amending terms and conditions; and
  - offer opportunities for continued employment up to March 2022 for all those who wish to play a part in the future.

## Next steps

- 4.23. We expect that every system will be ready to operate as an ICS from April 2021, in line with the timetable set out in the *NHS Long Term Plan*. To prepare for this, we expect that each system will, by this time, agree with its region the functions or activities it must prioritise (such as in service transformation or population health management) to effectively discharge its core roles in 2021/22 as set out in this paper.
- 4.24. All ICSs should also agree a sustainable model for resourcing these collective functions or activities in the long term across their constituent organisations.

- 4.25. To support all of the above, all systems should agree development plans with their NHSEI regional director that clearly set out:
- **By April 2021:** how they continue to meet the current consistent operating arrangements for ICSs and further planning requirements for the next phase of the COVID-19 response.
  - **By September 2021:** implementation plans for their future roles as outlined above, that will need to adapt to take into account legislative developments.
- 4.26. Throughout the rest of 2020, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHSEI will continue to lead conversations with different types of health and care organisations, local councils, people who use and work in services, and those who represent them, to understand their priorities for further policy and legislative change.
- 4.27. The legislative proposals set out in this document take us beyond our original legislative recommendations to the Government. We are therefore **keen to seek views on these proposed options from all interested individuals and organisations**. These views will help inform our future system design work and that of Government should they take forward our recommendations in a future Bill.
- 4.28. Please contact [england.legislation@nhs.net](mailto:england.legislation@nhs.net) or write with any feedback to NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT by Friday 8 January 2021.
- 4.29. For more information about how health and care is changing, please visit: [www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare](http://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare) and sign up to our regular e-bulletin at: [www.england.nhs.uk/email-bulletins/integrated-care-bulletin](http://www.england.nhs.uk/email-bulletins/integrated-care-bulletin)

NHS England and NHS Improvement  
Skipton House  
80 London Road  
London  
SE1 6LH

© NHS England and NHS Improvement 2020