



Summary of the *Interim NHS people plan*



The *Interim NHS people plan*¹ (the interim plan) gives an immediate focus for the workforce actions that need to be taken now, to begin the implementation of the *NHS long-term plan*. It will be followed by a fuller, five-year strategy after the government's spending review, when it is known what funding will be available to support the education and training required. This will be published alongside a detailed implementation plan for the *NHS long-term plan*².

The interim plan considers the workforce issues facing the NHS across five areas, which form the basis of this summary document.

Making the NHS the best place to work

The interim plan sets out a belief that workforce issues and planning have lost their priority at board level over the last decade, with operational and financial plans taking precedence. It recognises that workplace culture has become challenging for many, with vacancies causing staff to be overstretched, compromising quality of care and adding to financial pressures with the use of temporary staff. In addition, employment expectations have changed with people choosing to take a more flexible approach to their career and work life balance. All of these things need to be addressed.

The interim plan sets out a number of short-term actions to improve working lives for those in the NHS, with further rollout of existing support programmes around staff health and wellbeing.

The government is bringing forward a consultation on a new pension flexibility for senior clinicians to tackle the financial concerns that are preventing senior clinical staff from taking on additional work, or even remaining within the NHS. The HFMA have recently published a briefing on the impact of pensions lifetime and annual allowances on the NHS³.

¹ NHS, *Interim NHS people plan*, June 2019

² NHS, *The NHS long term plan*, January 2019

³ HFMA, *Pensions lifetime and annual allowances: the impact on the NHS*, May 2019

In the longer term, a workforce 'balanced scorecard' will be developed to work with the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) well-led assessment. This will form a key part of all organisation's annual reports. As part of the development of the full NHS people plan, an independent review of human resources and organisational development practices will be carried out in the NHS, to bring it into line with the best of the private and public sector.

Improving the leadership culture

The development of new service models brings new leadership challenges. The interim plan recognises that system-based leadership will be cross-sector and multi-professional, requiring new ways of working. The interim plan places much emphasis on the need for positive, compassionate and inclusive cultures, brought about by leadership which reflects these ideals. It is recognised that leadership occurs throughout an organisation, at different levels, with associated development needs to ensure that a positive culture is experienced throughout. The development of leadership curricula in professional bodies is seen as essential to this.

Senior leadership roles receive immediate focus in the interim plan, with an intention set out to develop an explicit set of competencies, values and behaviours required in those positions. A database will also be constructed to record the qualifications, experience and performance of current directors.

At a national level, NHS England and NHS Improvement recognise that they have work to do to model the behaviours that they want to see from leaders. They also acknowledge a significant role in providing leaders with support to make difficult decisions and time to make an impact.

Tackling the nursing challenge

The *NHS long-term plan* is heavily reliant on the development of multi-professional teams, which are themselves reliant on having sufficient nurses. The shortage of nurses in the NHS is therefore identified as the most urgent workforce challenge to tackle in the interim plan.

In the short term, it is essential to improve retention of current staff, hence the focus on making the NHS the best place to work. The interim plan also sets out an intention to increase international recruitment to address current shortages.

However, the shortage of nurses requires a long-term solution. The interim plan begins to identify work that can be done to increase the numbers able to undertake undergraduate nursing degrees, with a rapid increase in clinical placement capacity for the 2019/20 academic year. It is recognised that the nursing profession is not always the most attractive choice for students and work is required to improve perception of the career, with greater support offered while studying and in the early stages of nurses' working lives

Additional financial support is available for most students studying for pre-registration degrees, but uptake of this has not been at the levels expected. This suggests that students are unaware of this funding and further work needs to be done to promote it.

The interim plan identifies that investment in workforce development has fallen as organisations experience greater financial pressures, both locally and nationally. Over the next five years, it is intended that previous funding levels should be restored, an increase of around £85m nationally.

Delivering 21st century care

Delivering the ambitions of the *NHS long-term plan* will require a workforce that both works in a more multi-disciplinary way and includes staff who have a wider range of, or different, skills to the current mix. The interim plan sets out an intention to develop multi-professional credentials to enable people to widen their knowledge. It also recognises that the workforce needs to expand across all clinical

staff groups in order to support the changes, highlighting that much of the additional investment that accompanies the *NHS long-term plan* will be used to fund the additional staffing costs.

The interim plan states that the number and skill mix of the new posts will be refined over the next five years, building on the plans being developed within sustainability and transformation partnership (STP) and integrated care systems (ICS). This will inform where investment in training and education is focused.

The interim plan sets out early plans for the future workforce across:

- medical
- nursing
- allied health professionals
- pharmacy
- healthcare science
- dental
- physician associates.

The focus is on equipping staff across all areas to be able to work in a more multi-disciplinary way; to support people to enter the professions and then to retain them through improving working environments and offering opportunities for development.

The interim plan also recognises that volunteers and carers are integral to the success of the NHS and sets out ways in which support to people will be increased.

A new 'releasing time to care' programme will be established to share good practice and support improvement. Much of this will build on initiatives set out in the *NHS long-term plan*, changing ways of working through the use of technology which enables more time to be spent with patients. The interim plan recognises that substantial service change may require upfront capital investment in order to deliver service improvements and staff productivity gains.

In order to create an adaptable workforce that can meet future challenges of which we are not yet aware, the interim plan sets out a number of areas that can improve workforce flexibility. A review will be carried out into models of multi-disciplinary working to ensure that they support the *NHS long-term plan*. The interim plan also highlights the need to enable easier transfer between organisations; recognising skills and competencies that have been gained in other sectors, avoiding the need for duplicate training.

The *NHS long-term plan* includes a significant focus on the use of digitally enabled technology to support the delivery of healthcare. The interim plan recognises that training is required at all levels of the workforce to fully optimise the possibilities that technology offers.

A new operating model for workforce

The interim plan sets the expectation that, as ICSs develop, they will take on responsibility for workforce planning in their areas. It is recognised that some aspects such as pay, pensions and professional regulation need to be retained at a national level, but many other aspects can be dealt with locally, such as non-medical training and setting bank staff rates.

The interim plan sets out the criteria for deciding which workforce activities should be carried out at a national, regional or ICS level. It is also recognised that some activities have to rest with individual employing organisations, where they relate directly to staff wellbeing or employment.

A new national NHS people board will be established to develop the full people plan, to be published after the spending review. This will be supported by a people plan advisory group which will include national bodies, professional bodies and patient groups, among others.

At a regional level, teams will support the development of primary care networks and ICSs, supporting joint working and ensuring that areas are working together to develop their local workforce. As ICSs develop, more workforce activities can be undertaken by them, working closely with local government on shared priorities.

Next steps

The interim plan sets out the future vision for the NHS workforce, but more detail is needed in order to implement the necessary changes. The full people plan will provide a costed, five-year plan following the spending review, taking into account the aggregated plans from local systems.

Alongside the interim plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published summaries of the specific action to be taken for the professional groups detailed earlier; a summary of the engagement undertaken to develop the interim plan; and a selection of resources and case studies showing examples of good practice.

At this stage, the majority of actions set out in the interim plan are to be undertaken at a national level by NHS England and NHS Improvement, and Health Education England. For STPs and ICSs, the immediate actions required are to set out their plans to make the NHS the best place to work as part of their implementation plans for the *NHS long-term plan*. This is required by November 2019 so that the details of the full people plan can be considered in local decisions.