

FAQ on influencing the STP planning process

Introduction

In January 2019, NHS England published their long-term plan, looking at how to improve services across England and what the vision for our healthcare system is for the future.

The long-term plan states that NHS England are requiring all 44 Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) across England to develop five-year plans for their local areas outlining how they will meet the commits of NHS England's long-term plan. This provides a key opportunity for HIV stakeholders to get together and lobby for HIV to be included in these plans.

We are encouraging HIV clinicians, HIV voluntary sector services, and people living with HIV to engage with this process, so that HIV can be seen as a priority in health planning.

However, STPs and their planning processes are complex, so we have created this simple FAQ to explain what STPs are and how you can influence them.

FAQ

What are STPs?

STPs are 44 areas covering England where local NHS organisations and councils come together to develop proposals to improve healthcare services in their area. They were set up in 2015. **You can find which STP area you reside in by looking at the map [here](#).**

What do STPs do?

STPs are not organisations themselves, but rather a board of senior leaders across the healthcare system, who come together to discuss improving treatment and care. They are meant to break down the silos that exist across the system; bringing together primary and secondary care, commissioners and providers, NHS organisations and local authorities, mental and physical services and so forth.

Are they focused on integrating care?

Yes. One of the main aims of STPs is to integrate care. This is due to the recognition that effective healthcare must begin with the interconnected needs of the individual patient rather than the convenience of the separate elements of the healthcare system. It has to be 'joined up'.

What is the NHS Long Term Plan?

The NHS Long Term Plan was developed in 2018 and published in January 2019. The NHS Long Term Plan is a new plan for the NHS to improve the quality of patient care and health outcomes. It sets out how the £20.5 billion budget settlement for the NHS, announced by the UK Government in summer 2018, will be spent over the next 5 years. **You can find the NHS Long Term Plan [here](#).**

What is the STP five-year planning process all about?

In the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England stated that they are asking all STPs to develop five-year plans on how to improve services in their area, building on the priorities in the NHS Long Term Plan. They are due to submit their plans to NHS England by October 2019. This is a tight turnaround and doesn't give HIV organisations long to influence the plans. Submissions to STPs on how HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care might be addressed in the five-year plan should be made as soon as possible. Talk to your local STP about optimal timings.

What did the previous STP plans say about HIV?

NAT found that in the previous STP plans (2016), seven STPs mentioned HIV. These were North East London, North Central London, East London, South East London, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Northamptonshire, and West Yorkshire & Harrogate. **You can see all the previous STP plans [here](#).** This time round we want more STPs to mention HIV, especially those covering high prevalence areas, and make a commitment to improving HIV care.

It is important to remember that because the plans have to cover a wide range of topics, mentions of HIV are only brief. However, even a brief mention of HIV in the plan can act as an important lever to create change in your local area.

Why is this process important?

STPs are becoming important vehicles through which to drive improvement and integration across the healthcare system. As STPs develop into more formal partnerships and take on more responsibility, their influence is only likely to increase. The new STP plans will set the direction of healthcare in your local area for years to come and this means getting HIV mentioned in those plans, if only briefly, will be an important lever to improving elements of the HIV care pathway.

How should HIV stakeholders approach the STP planning process?

Firstly, explore the website for your local STP and see if they have detailed how you can engage with the development of their plan. There may be an opportunity to respond to a consultation or submit your views. **You can find details of the STP lead in your area, their website and contact details [here](#).**

You can also lobby your STP directly. NAT found that some of the mentions secured in the STPs original plans were as a result of HIV stakeholders coming together and making representations about HIV to their STP.

By working closely with people such as your local Directors of Public Health, sexual health and HIV commissioners at local councils and NHS England, HIV clinicians, HIV voluntary sector services, and people living with HIV, you can come together to lobby the STP and call for inclusion of HIV in the plan.

As you will likely on get a brief mention of HIV in the plans, it is probably best to work out what you believe the priorities might be in your area for improvement across the HIV care pathway. This could range from improved HIV testing in various settings to improved long-term condition management pathways for older people living with HIV.

How will arguments for HIV inclusion be most effective?

Arguments for an HIV-focus in STPs will be bolstered if built on local HIV data and assessment of need, economic arguments, reference to nationally agreed performance indicators and wider policy priorities of the STP.

What can we do after the plans have been written?

Regardless of whether HIV is included within an STP plan, you can still lobby the STP to engage on HIV-related issues. NAT's report found that in order to get your STP to work on HIV you can't wait for the STP to come to you. Our findings were that HIV can be considered at STP level, with plans for improvement formulated, if:

- local HIV stakeholders independently develop mechanisms for collaboration, integration and networking,
- arguments for an HIV-focus in STPs build on local HIV data and assessment of need, economic arguments, reference to nationally agreed performance indicators and generic policy priorities of the STP, and
- local HIV stakeholders take the initiative in developing proposals for STP consideration and persist in advocating for them.

If you would like more information on the STP planning process, please do not hesitate to contact Chris Hicks, Senior Policy & Campaigns Officer, NAT (National AIDS Trust) on Christopher.hicks@nat.org.uk

NAT

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