

News release

For immediate release

Commenting on today's reports about sustainability and transformation plans, Chris Ham, Chief Executive of The King's Fund, said:

'Sustainability and transformation plans represent a significant change in the way the NHS plans its services, placing the emphasis on collaboration rather than competition between NHS organisations. The plans are an important opportunity to bring together health and social care services to improve co-ordination and deliver better care for patients.

'The NHS continues to face huge financial and operational challenges. The plans will set out how areas can respond to these challenges, including the need to deliver efficiency savings on a scale not seen before. It is essential to maximise opportunities to increase productivity by improving clinical practice and reducing waste, although this cannot be done on the scale or at the pace needed to meet the target to find £22 billion in savings by 2020/21.

'There are concerns that some areas are focusing on plans to reorganise acute hospital services, despite evidence that major reconfigurations of hospital services rarely save money and do not necessarily improve care. It would be a huge shame if a vital opportunity to improve services for patients is derailed by bruising rows about ill-conceived hospital closures.

'Some reports have also suggested that plans will include proposals to reduce the number of hospital beds. It is hard to see how this can be done with demand for hospital care rising inexorably, bed occupancy already at eye-wateringly high levels and services outside hospital not in a position to provide an alternative after years of under-investment.

'Almost all the additional funding provided by the government this year is being used to reduce deficits in acute hospitals, leaving little if any to invest in services outside hospital. Sustainability and transformation plans will not be credible unless they demonstrate how money and staff for

these services will be found. At the same time, the government must ensure adequate funding is in place for this.’

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The King’s Fund has published [*Sustainability and transformation plans \(STPs\) explained*](#).

For further information, or to request an interview, please contact the Press and Public Affairs team on 020 7307 2585 (if calling out of hours, please ring 07584 146035).