

#ourNHS

no cuts | no closures | no privatisation



Don't Slash, Trash and Privatisise our NHS Unite Briefing for Members of Parliament on STPs

Our NHS faces another wave of drastic cuts, privatisation and reorganisation. This briefing is for MPs to understand what is happening and what action they can take to defend our NHS.

What are Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs)?

- NHS England has set in motion another top down reorganisation of the NHS. Under the banner of the **Five Year Forward View** they have created a new NHS bureaucracy based on **44 geographical 'footprint' areas**.
- Each footprint has been tasked to produce a **Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP)** that sets out how the area plans to redesign services and save money. This includes actions to **integrate health services with the social care system** which is currently the responsibility of local authorities.
- STPs are **centralising power** back to the Department of Health and NHS England, removing financial autonomy from Foundation Trusts and reintroducing central control over many of the organisations created in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Unite believes that STPs amount to plans to Slash, Trash and Privatisise our NHS

- Unite, with over 100,000 members in the health service, supports the aims of improving service efficiency, improved NHS cooperation and planning as well as integrating health and social care... BUT without sufficient funding and accountability Unite believes that the new system presents significant risks for NHS services and local authorities, driving cuts and privatisation. Each local STP is different but there are several overarching themes that MPs should be aware of. Unite can brief MPs on the specific impacts of local STPs.

Why?

1. There is a severe funding crisis in both the NHS and Social Care service

- The context for STPs is that the NHS is in a severe funding crisis entirely of the Tory Government's making.
- Research by the Health Foundation and Kings Fund shows that the Government has implemented the **worst financial settlement on the NHS in its history**. Since 2010 the **NHS budget has been almost static**, while the UK population has increased with a growing proportion living longer and having more long-term illnesses.
- NHS England estimates that to maintain services of the same quality as in the past, by 2020-21 the NHS in England would need **£30bn a year** more than the government was planning to give it. In response, the Government agreed to provide £8bn of the £30bn a year needed by 2020-21, but demanded that the remaining £22bn per annum gap had to be closed by productivity improvements (cuts) from STPs.
- **Social care funding** has fared even worse with councils having experienced a 37% to budgets between 2010 and 2015 (IFS) and a further 56% planned to be cut by 2019/20. The Local Government Association predicts that the underfunding of social care means that there will be a **£2.6 billion funding gap by 2020**. While this funding gap is smaller than the NHS's it hides much of the retraction in adult social care as councils have reduced eligibility to services to save money. The knock-on effect has meant increased acute health care costs as the social care system has failed patients and bed blocking as the support is not available for patients to leave hospital.
- Without enough money, **STPs are therefore set up to fail**. They are being asked to do the impossible and deliver far more health care with far less money.

2. The new structures are not accountable and Unite has serious concerns about their powers

- The STP project is yet another **top down reorganisation of the NHS** and one that has not been put before the electorate or consulted on with the public or staff.
- The lack of **legal basis** for the restructure means that there are no legal or accountability structures linking the organisations and individuals involved, while there are no procedures for determining how disagreements are to be resolved in the new informal bureaucracies.
- The STPs are being planned with **almost no public, professional or trade union involvement**, while CCGs and local authorities were told that they **cannot consult** or release information until NHS England has agreed the plans i.e. once the plans have been finalised.
- STP footprint structures have virtually no input from elected officials such as councillors and in many cases the plans themselves have been drawn up through spending millions on **private consultancy firms**.

3. STPs will make it easier to privatise the NHS

- STP footprints have no legal status so the **Health and Social Care Act 2012** continues to be the legislative framework for the NHS. This Act enforces tendering of NHS contracts by opening NHS organisations up to competition law, creating scope for the NHS to be **privatised**.
- Research by the NHS Support Federation found that over £16 billion of NHS clinical contracts were awarded through the market between 2013 and 2016, of which the private sector won nearly £5.5 billion (60%).
- There are concerns that the **STP changes may ramp up privatisation** across the English NHS as the service redesigns will create economies of scale that would be more appealing to private sector providers who have complained that many current contracts are not financially viable.
- This is reinforced by what appears to be a **new drive towards privatisation** - the HSJ reported (28th July 2016) that: *'NHS Improvement is to explore new partnerships between the health service and the private sector, including the potential for further outsourcing of clinical services and the use of "independent sector management models".'*

4. STPs have major implications for local authorities and councillors are accountable

- Despite little involvement from local councils STPs do have to be signed off by councillors and are subject to Overview and Scrutiny powers. Decisions about social care also require council involvement as they are the commissioners of services although they do not have veto powers over STP decisions.
- It is unclear how this will work in practice as the NHS **does not have legal powers over local councils**, despite social care being included in 'local health systems'.
- There were reports of local authorities being asked to sign off STPs without having seen the plans.
- There is also a **strong centralising message** from NHS England and it is unclear how this will interact with local councillors' autonomy, especially as STP footprint areas often cover several local authorities.

5. Impact on services

- This re-organisation of the NHS is **driven by funding cuts not evidence**. It therefore poses serious risks as local hospitals and departments are scaled back or closed.
- In many STPs there are proposals to make **patients and their families travel many miles** further to access services including emergency departments.
- Cuts will also mean **understaffing, deskilling roles, longer waiting times and missed targets** which will put the public at risk.

6. Impacts on staff

- The NHS crisis is continuing to push staff to breaking point and yet another **top down reorganisation of the NHS** and will cause huge levels of stress.
- Unite members continue to report major **job losses, cuts to terms and conditions, deskilling and downbanding of roles**. These are in practice the 'efficiency savings' that the Government are demanding.
- STPs have the potential to **break up of the Agenda for Change** national agreement and move terms and conditions to local or regional level. Such a move would undermine years of workforce planning and the work to end pay discrimination in the NHS.
- The STPs cut across existing formal union negotiating processes and so far, there has been **no meaningful consultation with unions** on any of the changes.

What you can do?

- **Get hold of a copy of the STP or STPs that cover your constituency**
- **Raise the content of the STP with other MPs and councillors covered by the STP footprint**
- **Speak to Trade Union branches covered by the STP**
- **Contact Unite to receive more information on your local STP**
- **Raise a motion in your local Labour groups**
- **Ask parliamentary questions about the expected impact of your STP**
- **Publicise concerns regarding your STP in local and national media**
- **Demand that all changes carried out under the remit of the STP are subject to full and meaningful consultation from public and staff**
- **Make sure that the scrutiny structures of your council are fully engaged with the proposals in the STP**
- **Work with local campaigners to hold the STP to account.**