

Annex A: Introduction and overview to technical and supporting guidance

Publishing Approval Reference 001300

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1. Introduction

The NHS Long Term Plan published in January 2019, calls on local health systems, Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), to create strategic system plans. These are expected to set out clearly the practical actions each system will take to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan commitments.

These strategic system plans will cover the period 2019/20 to 2023/24 and will form the foundation of service and system change over the next five years.

For 2020/21, every NHS trust, NHS foundation trust, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and directly commissioned service will need to agree organisation-level operational plans which will combine to form a coherent system-level operating plan.

This document will support organisations to develop robust and high-quality 2020/21 operational plans and should be read in conjunction with the [NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance 2020/21](#). It sets out details of the key technical elements of the operational planning process, covering CCG mergers, narrative plans, submission process overview, and Better Care Fund planning requirements, as well as key contacts, resources and timetable. A summary of all of the technical guidance is provided and includes links to each of the more detailed documents.

As outlined in the full planning guidance, the five-year NHS revenue funding settlement for 2019-24 has provided the opportunity for all ICSs and STPs in England to complete detailed five-year strategic plans. These plans show how the NHS Long Term Plan will be delivered for patients and the public across all parts of the country, including shared activity assumptions and local plans for financial recovery. The 2020/21 operational planning and contracting round must operationalise the first year of the five-year strategic plans. How we propose to align strategic and operational plans is described in the next section.

2. Alignment of strategic and 2020/21 operational plans

System strategic planning collections made in 2019/20 will subsequently support and inform operational planning in 2020/21. We expect that as far as practicable, strategic plans will provide the basis for agreeing indicative contract values for 2020/21 and activity levels. We anticipate there will be a clear link between the contracts and bottom line figures in strategic plans, and each organisation's eventual operational plan for 2020/21. As a corollary, we would not expect material changes in the key underlying assumptions as operational plans and contracts are then developed.

2.1 Role of ICS/STP systems

As we transition from strategic to operational planning for 2020/21, ICSs/STPs have an important role in ensuring the operational plans submitted for all the providers and commissioners in their system collectively deliver the commitments in the 2020/21 component of their five-year strategic plan. The ICS/STP leadership is expected to coordinate a collaborative operational planning exercise between all NHS providers and commissioners in the system, and each provider and commissioner should ensure their operational plans are finalised in agreement with their system partners.

Operating planning templates will be pre-populated with some headline data from the relevant organisation's contribution to their system strategic plan. The templates will require each organisation to provide a breakdown of any variance – see below for further information of this reconciliation. We will provide a strategic plan reconciliation tool which supports the reconciliation of this headline data from each individual operational plan back to the submitted strategic plan. This will take data covering finance, activity and workforce, allowing it to be presented at a system level, showing the variation to the corresponding figures from the strategic plan.

Using the aggregated data described below, we expect ICSs/STPs to discuss any identified areas of variation to the system plan with system partners, and to mitigate where necessary in advance of plan submission. Where there remains adverse variation between the outcome of operational plans and the strategic plan, ICS/STP partners should discuss this with their NHS England and NHS Improvement region to identify the driver for this variation, including movement between member organisations, and agree any necessary remedial action.

2.2 Activity

The strategic and operational plans for activity will be reconciled in four places in the operational planning template:

Activity waterfall: this will be the main point for reconciliation of activity data. CCGs and providers are asked to account for any variance to the strategic plan, using the following categories:

- revision of assumptions made about 2019/20 outturn position;
- revised Prescribed Specialist Service Identification Rules and Commissioner Assignment Rules;
- adjustment to correct alignment issue;
- adjustment to address organisational changes not previously accounted for;
- adjustment to correct errors in strategic plan;
- real change from strategic plan; and
- other adjustment to plans.

Comments are required for variance that is a result of actual changes to plans, or other variance (changes due to forecast outturn, alignment issues, organisational change, application of commissioner assignment rules or correction of errors that do not require further comments). This will be a hard validation, i.e. variance will be accepted but explanations must be provided in order for the template to be submitted.

Alignment tab: reconciliation information will also be available on the alignment tab which will show the submitting organisation how their operational planning alignment information compares to the alignment data submitted in strategic planning. If the variance is greater than an accepted tolerance level it will be flagged as red – however this is a data warning. No further action is required assuming the CCG or provider is content with their operational plan, and this flag will not prevent submission.

Suggested profiles: a tab is included in the template which provides a suggested profile for activity data. This tab will apply a profile based on historic data to the strategic plan figure, to give a proposed monthly split of the strategic planning figure. This is presented alongside the operational plan provided allowing comparisons to be made. There are no validations or warnings on this sheet, it is purely for information.

Performance data: the return requests quarterly or monthly breakdowns for a number of performance measures for which an annual figure was collected in the strategic planning exercise. For these measures, as with activity data, the annual figure submitted during strategic planning will be presented alongside the operational planning data. If there is a difference between the strategic and operational plan figures, submitters will be required to explain the variance using the comments box provided. This will be a hard validation, i.e. variance will be accepted but explanations must be provided in order for the template to be submitted.

2.3 Workforce

The 2020/21 workforce planning collection represents the more detailed collection on specific staff groups for Year 1 of the strategic plan. The strategic and operational plans for workforce will be reconciled within the workforce planning template. Comments are required for variance that is a result of actual changes to plans, or other variance and any differences will need to be explained. This will be a hard validation, i.e. variance will be accepted but explanations must be provided in order for the template to be submitted.

2.4 Finance

Each organisation will need to reconcile the bottom line financial position included in their operational financial planning template with their 2020/21 financial position included within the strategic plan submitted for their system.

Within each financial planning template, we have included a new table allowing for a reconciliation between the strategic and operational plan positions, should any movements be required. We have provided a number of categories that organisations should use to analyse any required movements in full. All movements should also be accompanied by descriptive commentary.

We have also included a reconciliation between operating and strategic plans within the STP-led contract and plan alignment template. This reconciliation applies to the contract relationships that are common to both submissions (i.e. the contract relationships within an STP footprint). The reconciliation will highlight any changes to variances between provider and commissioner contract and plan values (rather than comparing the absolute values within the operational and strategic plan submissions).

3. Approach to merging clinical commissioning groups

Throughout the 2020/21 operational planning round, all data collected will be expected to reflect the organisational structure in place during 2020/21. This means that where CCGs are merging on 1 April 2020, plans must be submitted on behalf of the newly formed organisations. This approach will be consistent across activity, finance, workforce and narrative plans.

To facilitate this approach, a lead CCG will be identified for each merger to submit all returns on behalf of the new organisation. Regional teams will contact affected organisations to identify these lead CCGs. In all collection templates the submitting CCG will submit under the code and name for the newly formed CCG, and this will be represented in all outputs (however, for activity they will log in to Strategic Data Collection Service (SDCS) under the legacy organisation code).

4. Narrative plans

Strategic plans submitted by ICSs/STPs continue to provide the strategic narrative for service delivery and transformation in the system for 2020/21. However, there is some further information we will require ICSs/STPs to submit on behalf of the providers and commissioners in their system for the purpose of operational planning, in the form of an operational narrative submission. This will include information regarding quality, workforce, activity and finance, broken down by provider and commissioner where necessary. In addition, it should provide a system summary, that identifies any operational risks or variation from the strategic plan and describes the action that system partners will take to manage this during 2020/21. Technical Annex B specifies the information required for each of these narrative components. ICS/STP partner organisations should work collaboratively to agree all elements of the operational narrative, to ensure it is aligned and delivers (or improves on) the 2020/21 component of the strategic plan.

5. Submission process overview

5.1 Activity and performance template

In 2020/21 activity and performance data for CCGs, providers and specialised commissioning will be collected via SDCS. This is the same system that was used for the collection of CCG and specialised commissioning plans for the 2019/20 planning round and recent LTP submission and can be accessed [here](#). This year CCGs and providers will submit using the same template and collection system.

Submitters from each organisation will be contacted before the launch of the collection and invited to sign up to the system if they do not already have a log in. When the collection opens the submission template will be available to download from the system. Full user guidance for accessing and using the system is available [here](#), and any queries regarding the system itself should be directed to the Data Collections team at NHS Digital data.collections@nhs.net

Any other queries, including any regarding the template itself should be directed to the NHS planning mailbox england.nhs-planning@nhs.net

5.2 Financial planning templates

In 2020/21 the operational financial planning templates will be issued and collected using the same systems as were used for the collection of 2019/20 templates:

Provider financial planning templates will be collected through the Provider Financial Monitoring System provider portals. We will email providers to confirm when the planning templates are available to download from the system. Full guidance for accessing and using the system is [here](#).

If you are a new user requiring log-in details, contact our IT Support team at IT.Support@improvement.nhs.uk.

Any other queries, including any regarding the template itself should be directed to NHSI.finplan@nhs.net.

Commissioner financial planning templates will be issued and collected through SharePoint. Any queries regarding the commissioner templates should be directed to NHSCB.financialperformance@nhs.net

STP-led contract and plan alignment templates will be issued to system leads and collected using the regional and national mailboxes that will be set out in the technical guidance that accompanies the templates.

5.3 Workforce templates

Primary care: primary care workforce templates will be collected through the SDCS. This is the same system that was used to collect plans for 2019/20, although for that year the workforce plan formed part of the activity and performance collection.

Submitters from each organisation will be contacted before the launch of the collection and invited to sign up to the system if they do not already have a log in. When the collection opens the submission template will be available to download from the system. Full user guidance for accessing and using the system is available [here](#), and any queries regarding the system itself should be directed to the Data Collections team at NHS Digital data.collections@nhs.net

Secondary care: provider workforce planning templates will be collected through the Provider Financial Monitoring System provider portals. We will email providers to confirm when the planning templates are available to download from the system. Full guidance for accessing and using the system is [here](#).

If you are a new user requiring log-in details, contact our IT Support team at IT.Support@improvement.nhs.uk.

Any other queries, including any regarding the template itself should be directed to england.workforceplanning@nhs.net.

5.4 Narrative plans

Draft and final narrative submissions should be emailed by STPs/ICSs to the relevant NHS England and NHS Improvement regional planning mailbox as outlined in the contacts Section 7 of this annex by the deadline dates in the planning timetable once agreed with the constituent organisations.

5.5 Triangulation template

Provider triangulation templates will be collected through the Provider Financial Monitoring System provider portals. We will email providers to confirm when the templates are available to download from the system. Full guidance for accessing and using the system is available [here](#).

If you are a new user requiring log-in details, contact our IT Support team at IT.Support@improvement.nhs.uk.

Any other queries, including any regarding the template itself should be directed to the mailbox NHSI.finplan@nhs.net.

5.6 Support available

Organisations will be supported to prepare their 2020/21 operational plans. All support materials will be made available on the [NHS Planning FutureNHS collaboration platform](#) as they become available (further details on how to access the pages can be found in Section 7).

Regional leads will be in communication with organisations throughout the preparation, review and assurance of operational plans.

6. Better Care Fund planning requirements

We were expecting to publish Better Care Fund (BCF) guidance at the same time as this guidance but the timescale has changed, and we will not be able to issue detailed guidance until February 2020. This will be circulated separately once available.

The detailed guidance will:

- provide confirmation of Better Care Fund planning requirements for 2020/21;
- confirm details of the national conditions for the fund that will be set by Government via the BCF Policy Framework. The Framework will cover 2020/21 only and will be similar to the framework in 2019/20;
- outline the assurance process and timescales for plans;
- detail definitions and guidance for setting ambitions for the national metrics for the Fund and confirmation of expectations for delayed transfers of care (DToC); and
- provide support for areas to develop and implement plans for integration.

7. Key planning contacts and resources

7.1 Regional contacts

Systems should initially contact their region for advice on planning, using the contact details below.

Location	Contact information
North East and Yorkshire	england.nhs-NEYplanning@nhs.net
North West	england.nhs-NWplanning@nhs.net
East of England	england.eoe2021operplan@nhs.net
Midlands	england.midlandsplanning@nhs.net
South East	england.planning-south@nhs.net
South West	england.southwestplanning@nhs.net
London	england.london-co-planning@nhs.net

7.2 National and wider technical issues

Subject area	Contact information
SDCS collection portal	data.collections@nhs.net
Finance and triangulation – queries from providers	NHSI.finplan@nhs.net
Finance – queries from commissioners	NHSCB.financialperformance@nhs.net
Capital and Cash	NHSI.CapitalCashQueries@nhs.net
Strategic Plan Reconciliation Tool	NHSI.Strategicfinance@nhs.net
Workforce	england.workforceplanning@nhs.net
NHS National Planning Team – activity and performance queries as well as any general queries not covered in the channels above	england.nhs-planning@nhs.net

[NHS Planning FutureNHS collaboration platform](#)

General updates and resources will be provided on the NHS Planning FutureNHS collaboration platform throughout the operational planning round.

You will need a FutureNHS account to access the planning pages, and can get this at: <https://future.nhs.uk/connect.ti/system/home> selecting the 'request access' button at the bottom of the 'Existing members – Log in' section.

To request access to the full contents of the planning pages, access the dashboard [here](#) scroll to the bottom of the screen, under 'Actions' select 'join this workspace'. You will be directed to an online form. Complete the information indicating why you require access and submit. The request will then be sent to the workspace manager for approval.

8. Information governance

Data will be shared within NHS England and NHS Improvement. Any further data sharing will be subject to an opt-out clause as detailed in the appropriate submission template.

Further support and information on information governance can be provided by: england.ig-corporate@nhs.net

9. Timetable

Milestone	Date
System plans shared regional teams	November 2019
S118 Tariff Consultation published	December 2019
Operational and technical guidance issued	w/c 27 January 2020
Draft 2020/21 NHS Standard Contract published for consultation	19 December 2019- 31 January 2020
2020/21 CQUIN guidance published	January 2020
National tariff published	January
First submission of draft operational plans	5 March 2020
First submission of system-led narrative plans	5 March 2020
2020/21 STP/ICS led contract/plan alignment submission	12 March 2020
Deadline for 2020/21 contract signature	27 March
2020/21 STP/ICS led contract/plan interim alignment submission	8 April
Parties entering arbitration to present themselves to National Directors of NHS England and NHS Improvement (or their representatives)	6 April – 10 April 2020
Submission of appropriate arbitration documentation	15 April 2020
Final submission of operational plans	29 April 2020
Final submission of system-led narrative plans	29 April 2020
Publication of the People Plan and national implementation plan for the NHS Long Term Plan	March/April 2020
Arbitration panel and/or hearing (with written findings issued to both parties within two working days after panel)	16 April – 1 May 2020
2020/21 STP/ICS led contract/plan final alignment submission	6 May 2020
Contract and schedule revisions reflecting arbitration findings completed and signed by both parties	7 May 2020

10. Directory of supporting annexes

Links to all annexes can be found [here](#)

B. NARRATIVE PLANS

This guidance outlines the process and required content for the system-led narrative plan submission for 2020/21 updating systems, Trusts and CCGs on the process for producing and submitting operational plan narratives including the provision of a template to follow.

Annex B: Guidance on the Production of System-Led Narrative Plan Submissions for 2020/21

C. FINANCE

The purpose of these materials is to signpost stakeholders to key technical documents for financial planning, provide anticipated timescales for publication of materials and links associated for access.

Annex C: Guidance for Financial Plans

Annex C1: NHS England and NHS Improvement Guidance for Commissioner Finance Business Rules

Annex C2: Financial Improvement Trajectories, Financial Recovery Fund and Marginal Rate Emergency Funding

National tariff document guidance will be published at the following link as soon as possible following the closure of the consultation (22 January 2020): <https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/developing-the-national-tariff/>

D. NHS STANDARD CONTRACT AND SUPPORTING GUIDANCE

The purpose of these materials is to signpost stakeholders to key technical elements associated with the NHS Contract Agreement, provide anticipated timescales for publication of materials and links associated for access.

Annex D: NHS Standard Contract and Supporting Guidance

Annex D1: Updating Non-Expiring Contracts for 2020/21 Guidance on the Process for Agreeing Variations and Resolving Disputes

Annex D2: Joint Contract Dispute Resolution for 2020/21

NHS Standard Contract has been published in draft for consultation at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/nhs-standard-contract/20-21/>. The consultation closes on 31 January 2020, and the final version will be published as soon as possible after that at the same link.

CQUIN (CCG-commissioned services and NHS England commissioned specialised services) guidance was published in January 2020 and is available at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/nhs-standard-contract/cquin/cquin-20-21/>

E. PEOPLE

This guidance document outlines the submission process for the primary care and provider workforce returns in the 2020/21 Operational Planning round. The purpose of this document is to update providers and commissioners on the process for producing and submitting operational plans and to provide guidance on the operational plan templates being used this year.

Annex E: Technical Guidance – People 2020/21

F. ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

The purpose of these documents is to update providers and commissioners on the process for producing and submitting Activity and Performance operational plans and to provide guidance on the operational plan templates to be submitted via the Strategic Data Collection Service (SDCS) this year. The deliverables for the NHS in 2020/21 are set out in the technical definitions document (Annex F1).

F: Activity and Performance Operational Planning Submission Guidance

F1: Activity and Performance Technical Definitions

G. NHS LED PROVIDER COLLABORATIVES

The Provider Collaborative model is based on what were formerly known as New Care Model (NCM) pilots. These pilots were launched in 2016/17 and trialled new ways of working across mental health providers. This document provides further details regarding the Provider Collaborative selection process, finance and governance arrangements.

G: Planning Guidance for NHS Led Provider Collaboratives