

## **NHS in England's priorities for 2021/2**

This week saw the publication of both the Government's mandate to NHS England and NHS Improvement and the NHS's priorities and operational planning guidance for 2021/2.

The [Government's mandate to NHS England and NHS Improvement](#) sets out the Government priorities that the NHS in England should be working to for 2021/2. This is closely aligned with the 2019 manifesto commitments as well as the [NHS Long Term Plan](#), while also accounting for the significant, long-term challenges posed by COVID-19. They have outlined five mandate objectives:

1. Continue to lead the NHS response to COVID-19

This remains the main priority as the pandemic progresses. The deliverables against which the NHS will be evaluated include the management of patients with "long Covid," the success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, and whether they are meeting the [Accessible Information Standard](#) in their communications with patients and the public.

2. Continue to implement the NHS Long Term Plan, focusing on transformation of services, to support NHS resilience, and continue to inspire public confidence

NHS England and NHS Improvement will be expected to first focus on minimising the adverse impact of the pandemic, and then on recovering delivery against the Long Term Plan commitments. The deliverables against which the NHS will be evaluated are listed in detail in Annex A of the document, and include the tackling of health inequalities, parity of treatment between mental and physical health, and improving access to primary and community care.

3. With support from Government, deliver the manifesto priorities that will enhance the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan

NHS England and NHS Improvement will be expected to continue to support delivery of the Government's 2019 manifesto commitments. The Government state that they will also be bringing forward a long-term solution for adult social care; to this end, NHS England will be expected to ensure that CCGs work effectively with local authorities to deliver the Better Care Fund. The deliverables against which the NHS will be evaluated are listed in detail in Annex A of the document, but also include progress against further relevant manifesto commitments such as helping patients with multiple conditions to have simplified access to the NHS.

4. Improving prevention of ill health and delivery of NHS public health services

The NHS will be expected to take broader action on preventable ill health as set out in the Long Term Plan, with a clear role for Integrated Care Systems to embed a focus on population health. The deliverables against which the NHS will be evaluated are listed in detail in Annex A of the document, but also include how the NHS recover public health services that were paused or had reduced uptake due to the pandemic, e.g., school-aged vaccinations and NHS cancer and non-cancer screening programmes.

5. Maintain and improve information sharing

NHS England and NHS Improvement will be expected to reduce barriers to information sharing to ensure that patients receive high quality, safe and integrated care. They will also be expected to work with Government to improve data collection processes, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens on frontline organisations. The deliverables against which the NHS will be evaluated include their ability to make as much data publicly available as possible and their contributions to the [Data Alliance Partnership](#).

### Funding

The mandate also sets out NHS England's revenue and capital resource limits for 2021/2. The capital and revenue resource limits reflect the NHS Funding Settlement and at this stage include £1.5 billion of the additional £3 billion to support NHS recovery from the impact of COVID-19 agreed at the Spending Review 2020. There is further work to do with HMT on agreeing plans for deploying the remainder of the £3 billion including £1 billion for elective recovery. The mandate includes the £6.6 billion already announced to support NHS England and NHS Improvement with ongoing COVID-19 costs for the first six months of the financial year.

In the [NHS's priorities and operational planning guidance for 2021/2](#), the NHS has identified six key priorities, with specific focus on COVID-19 recovery:

1. Supporting the health and wellbeing of staff and taking action on recruitment and retention

- Employers will be expected to put support in place to help staff recover from the pandemic response.
- Systems will be expected to develop improvement plans to improve diversity and address inequalities through recruitment and promotion practices.
- Systems will be expected to embed the innovative ways of working that the pandemic response fostered to support recovery and longer-term changes in delivering care.
- Systems will be expected take steps to sustainably increase the size of their workforce in line with measures set out in the NHS Long Term Plan.

2. Delivering the NHS COVID vaccination programme and continuing to meet the needs of patients with COVID-19

Offering a first dose to the adult population by the end of July remains a key priority, reducing the likelihood of increased pressure on the NHS, and reducing the spread of COVID-19 as social distancing is eased. All NHS organisations will be expected to ensure continued reliable application of the recommendations in the [UK Infection Prevention and Control guidance](#).

3. Building on what we have learned during the pandemic to transform the delivery of services, accelerate the restoration of elective and cancer care and manage the increasing demand on mental health services

To mitigate the significant impact the pandemic has had on NHS activity and elective care and meet the increased demand on mental health services, the NHS will commit to:

- Maximising elective activity and transforming the delivery of services
- Restoring full operation of all cancer services
- Expanding and improving mental health services and services for people with a learning disability and/or autism
- Delivering improvements in maternity care, including responding to the recommendations of the [Ockenden review](#)

4. Expanding primary care capacity to improve access, local health outcomes and address health inequalities

The Long Term Plan committed to a significant real terms expenditure increase on primary medical and community health services to improve prevention and keep people out of hospital. To this end, the NHS will commit to:

- Restoring and increasing access to primary care services
- Implementing population health management and personalised care approaches to improve health outcomes and address health inequalities

5. Transforming community and urgent and emergency care to prevent inappropriate attendance at emergency departments (ED), improve timely admission to hospital for ED patients and reduce length of stay

To meet this goal, the NHS will commit to:

- Transforming community services and improve discharge
- Ensuring the use of NHS111 as the primary route to access urgent care and the timely admission of patients to hospital who require it from emergency departments

6. Working collaboratively across systems to deliver on these priorities.

To meet this goal, the NHS will commit to:

- Effective collaboration and partnership working across systems
- Developing local priorities that reflect local circumstances and health inequalities
- Developing the underpinning digital and data capability to support population-based approaches
- Developing ICSs as organisations to meet the expectations set out in [Integrating Care](#)
- Implementing ICS-level financial arrangements

**If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the Policy Team at [policy@hospiceuk.org](mailto:policy@hospiceuk.org).**