

Healthwatch Staffordshire - Sustainability and Transformation Plans

What are STPs?

Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) have been drawn up in every part of England to enable the delivery of a transformed NHS; delivering the “Five Year Forward View” vision of better health, better patient care and improved NHS efficiency. The plans should cover all health and social care services in their areas, so as well as NHS bodies, councils are also key to their delivery.

How does it work in Staffordshire?

There are 44 STP areas in England, and in our area, the plan covers the whole of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Chair of our STP is John MacDonald, who is also Chair of University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust. The Chairs of all STPs are local leaders in either health or social care. The Programme Director is Penny Harris, and all the Chief Executives and Accountable Officers of all the Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, and senior officers from the county and city councils sit on the Programme Board.

Healthwatch Staffordshire and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent also have seats on the Programme Board, with the remit to represent the interests of patients and service users.

What’s happened so far?

All the STPs had to submit an initial plan in June 2016 to NHS England and NHS Improvement, the two national regulatory bodies. These were not made public at this stage, although there are plans to produce a summary in the next few weeks. A major part of this submission was for areas to set out the challenges they face – this was called the “Case for Change”. There is a presentation on the Case for Change for Staffordshire which can be found [here](#). This sets out the scale of the financial challenge, but also the quality and prevention issues that need to be addressed to improve our health and social care services.

The Programme has also been fully established, with Chief Executives and Accountable Officers leading on work designed to tackle different parts of the health and care system – including Urgent and Emergency Care, Enhanced Primary and Community Care, Planned Care, Prevention, Long Term Conditions, Frail and Elderly Care, and Cancer and End of Life Care. There is also supporting work looking at issues such as workforce, estates, IT, and contracting.

STPs and Healthwatch

Healthwatch Staffordshire and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent have both been working closely with the STP since May this year. We are members of the Programme Board, and co-chair the Communications and Engagement sub-group. We have been promoting the need for early engagement with patients and the public, and the need to involve the public in developing solutions to address the challenges of our health and care system. Whilst we have had to respect the national requirement not to share plans at this stage, we have worked to raise awareness about the process through our meetings and communications.

Through our work, we have now been able to gain agreement from the STP to guidance on engagement and consultation, which sets out the requirement for patient and public engagement in each of the work streams developing plans for the future, including setting up patient reference groups. These are now starting to be put in place, and we will be promoting opportunities for the public to get involved.

In addition, Healthwatch Staffordshire and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent have also committed resources to running **public events** in each of the 8 districts in Staffordshire and 2 in Stoke-on-Trent in November and December. The focus of these events will be the STP, and there will be senior managers and clinicians available at each to set out plans and answer questions. These Conversation Staffordshire/Conversation Stoke-on-Trent events will also give local people the chance to provide input on the development of the plans, and all the feedback/suggestions from the event will be considered.

To support these and other engagement activities, we have also been commissioned to co-ordinate the **STP Ambassador programme**. This programme will seek to recruit public and staff representatives from across the county and city who are prepared to be briefed about the STP, and to go out into their local communities and networks to raise awareness and engage with people about it. Ambassadors will also be asked to help at events to support public and staff discussions and gather feedback.

What about public involvement?

Nationally, our view is that STPs have been slow to engage with the public, and that the initial timescales did not give time for proper public involvement. In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, we have worked hard to address these concerns with the STP and are pleased with the progress we have made, although much more needs to be done.

We are also pleased that nationally there is now a recognition of the crucial role of the public voice in developing these plans, and recently NHS England has issued guidance on this which can be found [here](#). The role of Healthwatch in supporting public engagement is recognised in this document, and we see this as a key priority for us over the coming months.

Whilst we are not yet in a stage of formal consultation as plans are still being formulated, we see that now is the key time for people to get involved and influence those plans.

What doesn't the STP cover?

The STP cannot cover the whole of the planning and delivery of health and care services in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Some changes to the way services are delivered were already being planned and worked on, and these will continue. Healthwatch is working with the STP to understand what is happening in respect of the STP work, and what would have happened anyway, so that we can keep the public informed.

What happens next?

The next big landmark is that the STP has to submit an updated plan with more detail by 21 October 2016. It is expected that this plan will start to look at what services may be affected by change, and

options for how this will happen. Healthwatch is very keen that this stage of the plan should be made public, and we will continue to press for this to be the case.

How do I have my say?

In the meantime, there is a lot of work to be done by all of the work streams, and by Healthwatch in ensuring that there is a strong public voice informing that work. In the next month, we will be issuing the dates and venues for the public events, recruiting and training Ambassadors to help increase public and staff engagement, and help to find patient representatives who can support the detailed planning that is going on.

If you wish to get involved, please contact Marie Wardle on marie.wardle@ecstaffs.co.uk