

# Major reforms to NHS workforce planning and tech agenda

Recruitment, training and retention of NHS staff and digital transformation will be put at the heart of the NHS in England, under new reforms announced by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care today.

The plans will aim to see more patients benefit from the best possible care, with the right staff in place to meet patients' needs.

This will sit alongside the strategic NHS workforce plan Ministers previously commissioned to report in spring, looking at what the workforce of the future should look like.

The Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid is also setting out his intention to merge the body responsible for the education and training of the health workforce, Health Education England, with NHSE/I, putting long-term planning and strategy for healthcare staff recruitment and retention at the forefront of the national NHS agenda.

In addition, the Secretary of State has accepted the recommendations of Laura Wade-Gery, Non-Executive Director at NHS England and Chair of NHS Digital, including to merge NHSX and NHS Digital into NHSE/I.

The recommendations build on the huge progress made on digital transformation during the pandemic, following a commission by the Secretary of State in summer 2020, and will improve co-operation between the key digital bodies of the NHS by bringing them under one roof for the first time.

By merging these three organisations with NHSE/I, government and the NHS are ensuring the health and care sector is fully equipped to face the future and deliver for patients.

The changes will better support the recovery of NHS services, address waiting list backlogs, and support hardworking staff, all while driving forwards an ambitious agenda of digital transformation and progress.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said:

To ensure our record NHS investment makes a lasting impact, I am bringing workforce planning and digital transformation into the heart of the NHS.

These reforms will support our recovery from COVID-19 and help us tackle waiting lists to give patients excellent care in years to come.

I would like to pay tribute to all our colleagues at Health Education England, NHS Digital and NHSX for the enormous progress

they have made, which we will continue to drive forward with their help.

Amanda Pritchard, NHS chief executive said:

NHS organisations have worked more closely than ever to respond to the COVID pandemic and these changes build on that success.

Digital and workforce are central to transforming the NHS to tackle the backlog and recover services after the COVID pandemic, as well of course deliver on our Long Term Plan commitments and maintain momentum of the lifesaving NHS COVID vaccination programme, all while looking after thousands of patients in hospital with the virus. By coming together in this way, the whole health service can continue progress in delivering these goals.

Health Education England Chair, Sir David Behan, said:

The current arrangements separate service and financial planning from workforce planning and development . These changes bring these three functions together at the centre of the NHS and reinforce the priority of workforce at the very heart of the NHS. They will allow more progress to be made more quickly.

Chief Executive of Health Education England, Dr Navina Evans, said:

This decision marks a step change in the approach to service delivery and workforce planning. It presents an opportunity to bring the strengths of our HEE people in to the centre of the NHS and focus on supporting the right future of health and care for the population we serve.

Chief executive of NHSX, Matthew Gould, said:

For the past two years, NHSX has been making the case for digital transformation in the NHS, and for digital to be integrated within the NHS rather than kept in its own silo. This reorganisation is the culmination of that campaign. It is an excellent step – a more coherent structure that will allow us to accelerate digital transformation across health and care.

It comes after two years in which NHSX, NHS Digital and the NHS and social care frontline have together made extraordinary progress - from allowing the NHS to move to remote working and consultations in the heat of the pandemic, to introducing virtual wards and remote monitoring of patients at home, to building the tech to

underpin the vaccine rollout and the NHS COVID Pass.

Non-Executive Director at NHS England and Chair of NHS Digital, Laura Wade-Gery, said:

In the rest of our lives, digital has really changed how we live and we must now make this true in healthcare. The goal of my review is to equip the national centre with the right capability to support Integrated Care Systems to deliver better citizen health. We need to have the culture, operating model, skills, capabilities and processes to put data, digital and technology at the heart of how we transform health services. I'm delighted that the Secretary of State and Amanda Pritchard intend to implement my recommendations and accelerate progress in transforming the way healthcare is delivered.

Interim CEO of NHS Digital, Simon Bolton, said:

The use of technology and data across health and care has been vital in managing the pandemic, and essential to supporting the frontline and ensuring care can continue to be delivered.

From the vaccine roll out to identifying and protecting the most vulnerable to coronavirus, I am extremely proud of everything we have achieved during this challenging period, in close collaboration with our partners, which has made a real and valuable impact for the public.

Now we will build on this progress as one organisation, accelerating the digitally enabled transformation of the NHS and improving it, both for its staff and the people it serves at the time they are most in need.

Under the leadership of Sir David Behan and Dr Navina Evans, HEE has helped to grow the NHS workforce rapidly and played a vital role during the pandemic, enabling the safe deployment of students to the frontline and working closely with educational institutions to enable students to complete their studies.

The workforce reforms build on the progress HEE has made, with record numbers of doctors and nurses currently working in the NHS. This includes:

- integrating NHS, workforce and finance planning in one place at a national and local level;
- driving changes to education and training to allow employers to recruit the health professionals they need to provide the right care to patients in the years to come;
- enabling a single national strategy for the NHS and make every penny of

- the record government investment in the NHS count; and
- providing a simplified national system and single line of accountability for NHS performance.

The NHS and social care sectors have made significant digital and technological advancements over the last few years. NHSX has fulfilled its mandate, getting digital transformation into the heart of the NHS's future vision.

Working at pace, both NHSX and NHS Digital have delivered innovative solutions to new challenges such as monitoring patients at home in virtual wards and the roll out of NHS COVID Pass. There are now nearly 20 million users registered to the NHS App which offers a wide range of individual health benefits and allows users to have their GP records at their fingertips.

In addition to these reforms, DHSC will also establish a Digital Delivery Unit to sit within the existing NHS Delivery Unit. This single, central unit with data at its core will help government better understand the blockers to recovering NHS services following the pandemic and how they can be overcome.

Ahead of winter to support the workforce, in 2021/22 the NHS is investing £37 million in mental health support with 40 dedicated staff mental health hubs across the country.

From the outset of the pandemic the NHS increased its health and wellbeing support for staff by offering a range of services, including: a mental health helpline in partnership with the Samaritans, open 7am-11pm, and a 24/7 text support service to provide listening and counselling support; specialist bereavement support from fully qualified trained advisors; a range of free self-help apps; and a dedicated website which signposts to further materials and practical support.

From April 2022, thanks to the new Health and Social Care Levy, UK wide healthcare funding will rise by a record £36 billion over the next three years, and the reforms announced today will help ensure this funding makes a lasting impact.

The levy funding is on top of the government's previous historic long-term settlement for the NHS, which will see NHS funding increase by £33.9 billion to a total of £148.5 billion by 2023-24, which we have enshrined in law.

The new funding includes a commitment to ring-fence an additional £8 billion to fund waiting list recovery – the biggest catch-up programme in NHS history.

### ***Background information***

- HEE is an executive non-departmental public body of the Department of Health and Social Care, responsible for coordination of education and training within the health and public health workforce within England, including the training of doctors and nurses.
- NHS Digital is a non-departmental public body responsible for the

information, data and IT systems for commissioners, analysts and clinicians in health and social care in England,

- NHSX is a joint unit of NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care, supporting local NHS and care organisations to digitise their services, connect the health and social care systems through technology and transform the way patients' care is delivered at home, in the community and in hospital
- A power to enable formal legal mergers of DHSC's arm's length bodies is currently being considered by Parliament as part of the Health and Care Bill. The formal merger of HEE and NHSEI is therefore subject to Parliament's approval of that measure, expected in summer 2022.
- NHS Digital and NHSX will form part of the new Transformation Directorate within NHSE alongside Improvement, and Innovation, Research and Life Sciences
- The NHSE/I Transformation Directorate will continue to lead the digital transformation agenda for the NHS and social care at national and ICS level.
- NHSX will evolve into the strategy function of the Transformation Directorate.
- Simon Bolton, the interim CEO of NHS Digital will become the Chief Information Officer of NHSE/I.
- As soon as legislation allows, NHS Digital will cease to be an independent Arm's Length Body of the Department of Health and Social Care.