



FUTURE  
HEALTH



# Putting Sustainability into Practice: A Call for Evidence

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## *A Call for Evidence: Sustainability and the NHS*

This call for evidence is being carried out through a collaboration between the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and Future Health Research, to better understand sustainability in the NHS. IPPR is the UK's pre-eminent progressive think tank and runs the country's largest progressive health research programme. Future Health undertakes cutting edge public policy research to help shape the global healthcare debate – including through active collaboration with those who share a mission to create healthier, wealthier nations.

Covid-19 proved that healthcare in England is not sustainable. While we could pour over everything that has gone wrong, the far more important task is to evaluate the pandemic experience and embed the lessons it teaches us about how our health system works. It might be comforting to see the pandemic as a 'black swan' event, but the blunt reality is a pandemic was both a predicted risk, and a warning shot of the disruption poor health could cause in the future. As global health vulnerability increases; as our population grows and ages; as climate emergency progresses; and as anti-microbial resistance progresses, we need to be better prepared.

There will be nothing more important than our ability to embed sustainability as a fundamental consideration in the design and delivery of our healthcare services. In line with international studies, we define sustainability as:

“a health system's ability to continually deliver the key health system functions of providing services, generating resources, financing and stewardship...in pursuit of its goals of improving population health”<sup>1</sup>

That is, we think sustainability is about more than ensuring we have an NHS that can just about get through when health shocks happen. Rather, it's about creating a system that can maintain high standards of access and quality through all the seasons, including crisis events.

**In this call for evidence, we are interested in better understanding the practical actions the NHS in England can take to secure sustainability today.** In some instances, that will be about increasing or releasing money – to rise to the new challenges, and harness the new innovations, created by the last 18 months. But 'more money' alone is not a strategy for sustainability. More staff time cannot simply be 'bought and sold', and the learnings from the significant budget rises of the early 2000s are that funding needs to be attached to clear reform and transformation to be effective.

Actions to embed sustainability could include:

- Releasing funding through more productive services
- Releasing or increasing staff time
- Making the population healthier, or tackling health inequalities
- Actions to help scale or spread innovation and best practice

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_PHSSR\\_Interim\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Pilot\\_Phase.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_PHSSR_Interim_Report_of_the_Pilot_Phase.pdf)

This list is not exhaustive, and we are interested in other ideas.

Following on from the global work of the *Partnership for Health System Sustainability and Resilience*, this call for evidence is interested in exploring sustainability across five domains:

- 1. Capital:** How can the NHS' capital regime be designed around sustainability – and support shifts to a more preventative NHS
- 2. Workforce:** How can the workforce be designed sustainably, based on meeting future challenges rather than extrapolating out from the problems we face today?
- 3a. Service Design:** How can integrated care services deliver more preventative, sustainable care
- 3b. Service Delivery:** How can delivery be optimised or streamlined, to make better use of money, workforce time and capacity – while maintaining quality and safety?
- 4. Innovation:** What contribution can innovative technologies, AI, digital tools and medicines make to increasing sustainability?
- 5. Care Pathways:** How can we reimagine the elective pathway, to secure sustainability in a context of record-breaking waiting times?

Crucially, we are also interested in the interplay between these themes. For instance, we're interested in where technology can free up staff time; or where AI can facilitate a sustainable change in a care pathway; or how integration might facilitate improvements in health infrastructure and pathways.

The evidence you submit might be from a range of sources:

- Academic or grey literature on where sustainability can be improved, or resource (money through to staff time) released
- Examples of innovations that can save money, improve health outcomes, strengthen the economy, or free up health professional's 'time to care'
- Examples of pilots, service reorganisations or evaluations that you've run or used that improve care, could replace an existing service, or otherwise save time or money within the NHS
- First-hand experience of the healthcare system in England

You don't have to answer every question – in fact, you might only want to answer one or two. You can submit your views in several ways. If you'd like to submit online, please feel free to access the questions online [here](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZMMWQ25): <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZMMWQ25>. Or if you'd like to submit via this form, please send your responses as a saved word attachment or pdf to [sustainablehealth@ippr.org](mailto:sustainablehealth@ippr.org). Our preferred format for emailed responses document with responses in bulleted paragraphs.

**The deadline for submissions is 18:00 on Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> September.**

We will keep your data secure, and it will only be accessed by authorised IPPR and Future Health researchers. We will delete all personal data within three months of the end of the study. Future Health Research and IPPR will use responses to this document to inform a policy publication, with pragmatic and constructive recommendations for government. We will also follow it with an event on sustainability towards the end of the year.

Our Call for Evidence is open to all, in the interest of getting the widest possible span of evidence. Inevitably, this means we will not be able to publish or cite every response we get – but we will endeavour to reflect the full conclusions of the evidence we receive.

We believe there is huge innovation and bold thinking that can create a sustainable health system – one up to facing the aftermath of a health shock and a future of health disruption. Compiling your evidence, ideas, pilots, and products into tangible actions is the first step to making that happen. Thank you for taking the time to submit to this call for evidence, and we look forward to working with you on the ideas and next steps.

## About You

What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your email? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you responding as an individual, or on behalf of an organisation?

- I am responding as an individual
- I am responding on behalf of an organisation

(Name of organisation) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you happy for our researchers to contact you about your response to this document?

- Yes
- No

## Consultation Questions

*Where possible, please link to evidence and evaluations (footnote, hyperlink, or reference), give product names, or give details of where service innovations are happening. This will help us pinpoint tangible actions government can take – or innovations it can aim to scale.*

**Definitions:** Do you have a view on how sustainability should be defined?

**Domain 1: Capital:** How can the NHS' capital regime be designed around sustainability – and support a shift to a more preventative or equal NHS?

**Domain 2: Workforce:** How can the workforce be designed sustainably, based on meeting future challenges rather than extrapolating out from the problems we face today?

**Domain 3a: Service Design:** How can integrated care services deliver more preventative, sustainable care? What are the barriers, enablers, innovations and/or opportunities?

**Domain 3b: Service Delivery:** How can delivery be optimised or streamlined, to make better use of money, workforce time and capacity – while maintaining quality and safety? Where are we not investing properly in things with a good ROI investment, or still investing in services that would better be decommissioned?

**Domain 4: Innovation:** What contribution can innovative technologies, AI, digital tools and medicines make to increasing sustainability? Is there a link between innovation and tackling health inequalities?

**Domain 5: Care Pathways:** How can we reimagine the elective pathway, to secure sustainability in a context of record-breaking waiting times?

**Across the domains:** Are there any interplays across the domains – for example, can innovation support workforce sustainability, or can the capital regime in the NHS support better service design?

**Finally:** Do you have any other views on increasing sustainability in the health service, beyond those explored so far?

## About Us

**IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research**, is the UK's leading progressive think tank. We are an independent charitable organisation with our main office in London. IPPR North, IPPR's dedicated think tank for the north of England, operates out of offices in Manchester and Newcastle, and IPPR Scotland, our dedicated think tank for Scotland, is based in Edinburgh.

Our primary purpose is to conduct and promote research into, and the education of the public in, the economic, social and political sciences, science and technology, the voluntary sector and social enterprise, public services, and industry and commerce. Other purposes include to advance physical and mental health, the efficiency of public services and environmental protection or improvement; and to relieve poverty, unemployment, or those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage. Registered charity no: 800065 (England and Wales), SC046557 (Scotland)

**Future Health Research** undertakes cutting edge public policy research, to generate new insights and solutions, helping to shape the global healthcare policy debate. Future Health seeks to actively collaborate with all those who share in the mission of creating healthier, wealthier, people communities and nations. Future Health is led by Richard Sloggett, former Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

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