

# CCG mergers must still go ahead in April, says NHS England

By Sharon Brennan | 27 January 2021

**An NHS England letter to systems reiterates STPs must have a single commissioner by April 2021**

**It said it will keep this plan “under review” to ensure forcing through CCG mergers “does not create undue capacity constraints”**

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**Commissioners remain under pressure to merge by April despite the demands the pandemic has placed on their systems.**

In a letter sent to all system leaders yesterday, NHS England said mergers of clinical commissioning groups should be “complete by April 2021”.

The letter suggested some administrative “burden[s]” they could cut to release “capacity to manage the covid pandemic”. It said some reporting requirements could be reduced such as annual and financial reports.

However, it said “system by default work (including work on CCG mergers) has been restarted”.

The letter also confirms that a range of reporting and assurance requirements are suspended due to covid, much of which has been the case since the spring. It says NHSE “oversight meetings” with local areas will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

NHS England's legislation proposals, published late last year, said all sustainability and transformation partnerships are required to become integrated care systems by April this year as well. The document made it clear that for each ICS there must only be a single CCG, which tightened previous NHSE guidance saying ICSs should "typically" have a single commissioner. NHSE has not yet said which are due to merge this year, though.

To date, 13 STPs remain and typically it is in these systems that CCGs have yet to merge into a single commissioner. However, some ICSs (which are deemed more advanced in terms of system development) such as Surrey Heartlands are not yet operating with a single commissioner either.

The document also recommended CCGs focus on "supporting primary care and providers to maintain and restore service" and that they should "redeploy [most of their clinical staff]... to the front line."

The letter, signed by NHS England's chief operating officer Amanda Pritchard, said: "We will keep this work under review to ensure it continues to enable collaborative working and does not create undue capacity constraints on systems."

Ms Pritchard also said the Department of Health and Social Care was reviewing whether "regulations should be amended" to extend the 30 June deadline for systems to submit quality accounts and NHSE/I will work with cancer alliances to prioritise delivery of long-term plan cancer commitments that "free up capacity and slow or stop those that do not".

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Source

*NHS England letter*

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Source Date

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