

Survey of NHS trust leaders on the financial reset

NHS Providers is the membership organisation for the NHS hospital, mental health, community and ambulance services that treat patients and service users in the NHS. We help those NHS foundation trusts and trusts to deliver high-quality, patient-focused care by enabling them to learn from each other, acting as their public voice and helping shape the system in which they operate.

NHS trusts in England collectively account for £132bn of annual expenditure and employ 1.4 million people.

Background

In March 2025, at a meeting with trust and ICB chairs and chief executives, Sir Jim Mackey unveiled his plans for the NHS financial reset, which included action to address the overall projected deficit. NHS leaders have gripped this ask and made significant progress, but it has resulted in trusts taking difficult decisions to deliver these operational and financial plans.

In April 2025, we surveyed trust leaders, asking for their views on the impact of the financial reset on trusts, patients and staff. We received 160 responses from chief executives, chairs and other board executive directors. The responses covered 114 different trusts, accounting for over half (56%) of the provider sector (205 trusts), from all regions and trust types in England including acute, acute specialist, ambulance, community and mental health trusts.

This document provides additional detail on the statistics in our accompanying press release.

Key findings

- Nearly half (47%) of those surveyed told us that they will have to scale back service provision to deliver their financial plan and a further 43% have this currently under consideration.
- More than a quarter (26%) said they will need to close some services to deliver their financial plan and a further 55% have this currently under consideration.
- Over a third (37%) of respondents said their organisation will cut substantive clinical posts to deliver their financial plan, with a further 40% saying this is currently under consideration.

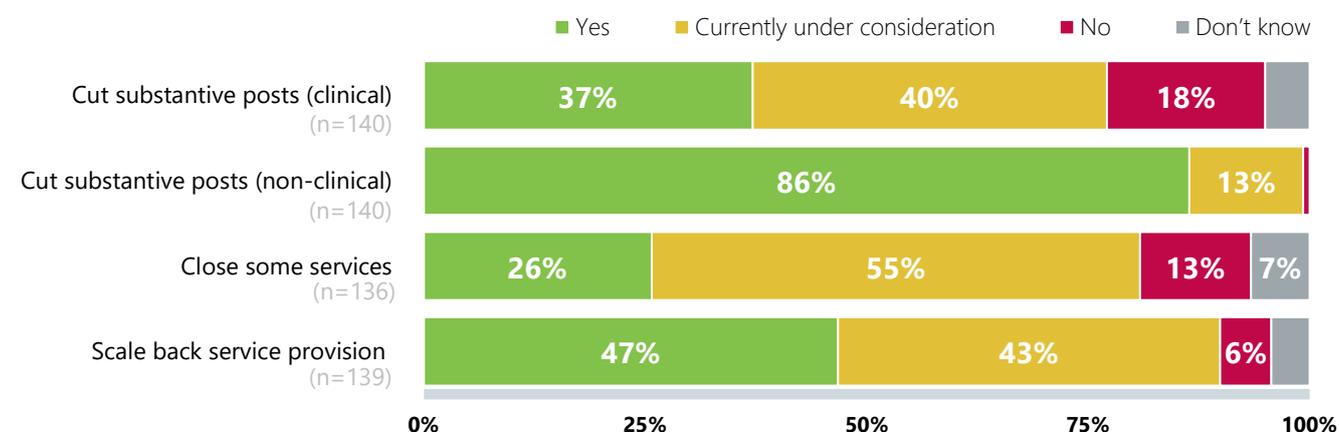
- 86% of respondents said they will have to cut substantive non-clinical posts in order to deliver their financial plan this year, a further 13% have this under consideration.
- Over nine in ten respondents said they were considering further reductions to temporary staffing costs (91%) to deliver their financial plan this year. Over eight in ten respondents (85%) were considering a recruitment freeze.
- Nine in ten respondents (94%) reported that the actions required to deliver financial plans would have a negative impact on staff wellbeing and culture.
- 45% of those surveyed were extremely (25%) or moderately (20%) concerned that the actions they are having to take to deliver their financial plan will compromise patient experience.
- Only 12% of respondents were confident they have sufficient access to capital to deliver a positive environment for staff, patients and service users. Close to three in five respondents said patient experience (61%), work to address health inequalities (60%) and access to timely care (57%) were most at risk of being impacted in order to deliver financial plans.
- Nearly nine in ten (88%) respondents disagreed that trusts and systems have sufficient funding to invest in prevention and help manage future demand growth.
- Eight in ten (81%) surveyed disagreed that trusts and systems have sufficient funding to invest in digital transformation.

Analysis

Cuts and changes to services and posts

FIGURE 1

In order to deliver your financial plan this year, is your organisation going to have to:



- Over a third (37%) of respondents said their organisation will cut substantive clinical posts to deliver their financial plan, with a further 40% saying this is currently under consideration.
- 86% of respondents said they will have to cut substantive non-clinical posts in order to deliver their financial plan this year, a further 13% have this under consideration.

- More than a quarter (26%) said they will need to close some services and a further 55% have this currently under consideration.
- Nearly half (47%) told us that they will have to scale back service provision to deliver their financial plan and a further 43% have this currently under consideration.

Quotes

"Due to acute demand on services outstripping the funding envelopes, other services will need to be reduced to prevent costs from increasing and to deliver against our financial targets. So far, we have refrained from things that create health inequalities but these are likely to be part of discussions to enable longer term financial recovery." Finance director

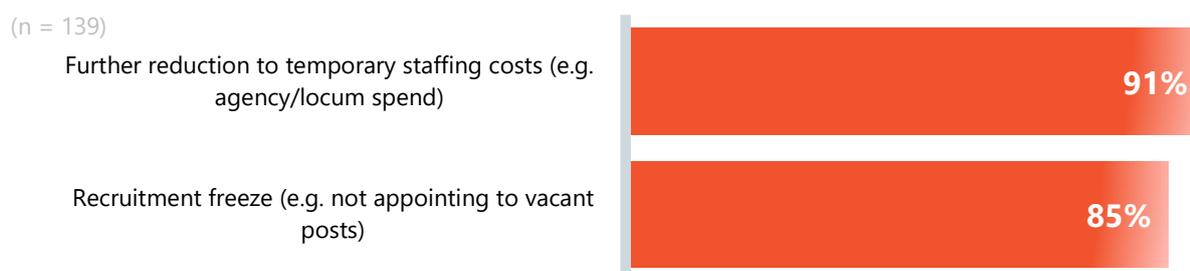
"The plans are currently being worked up. Our red lines are patient safety and high quality care for all those who need us. We have a stated policy that [confirms] our values including supporting EDI and doing the right thing by our staff." Chair

"Cutting 1,100 wte" Finance director

"Between 25-35 WTE corporate posts. Clinical posts likely to balance off with increases elsewhere " Director of operations/Chief operating officer

FIGURE 2

In order to deliver your financial plan this year, is your organisation considering any of the following actions (tick all that apply):



Note: chart displays excerpt of variables from the full multiple-choice question.

- Over nine in ten respondents said they were considering further reductions to temporary staffing costs (91%) to deliver their financial plan this year. Over eight in ten members (85%) were considering a recruitment freeze.

Quotes

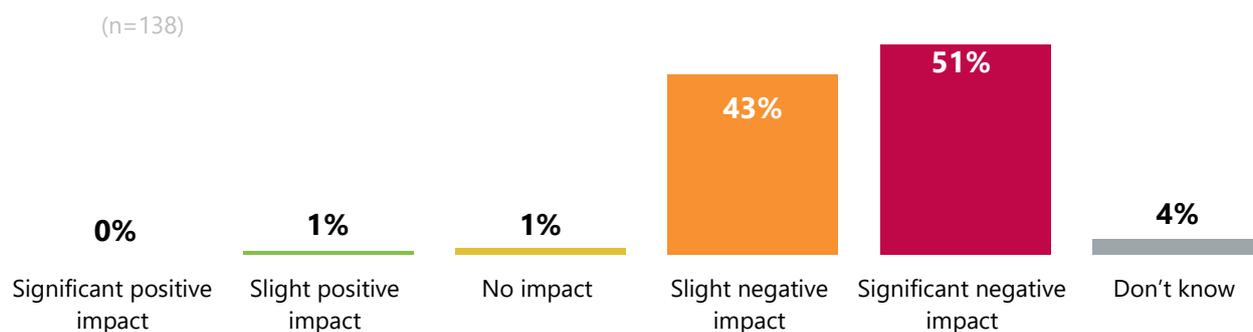
"Many of the above (vacancy freeze, tightened controls on recruitment) were put in place in 24/25 and will need to remain." Chief executive

"Nothing is off the table" Finance director

Impacts on staff wellbeing and patient experience

FIGURE 3

What impact, if any, do you expect the actions required to deliver your financial plans for 2025/26 will have on staff wellbeing and culture within your organisation?



- Nine in ten respondents (94%) reported that the actions required to deliver financial plans would have a negative impact on staff wellbeing and culture, with half (51%) saying that the actions would have a significant negative impact.

Quotes

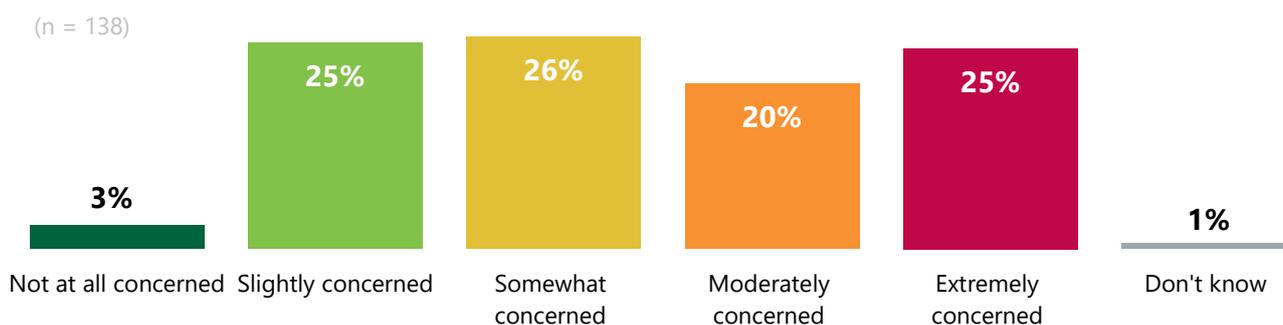
"Increased risk of burnout as we will be unable to supply staff with resources to do the job they have been trained to do." Medical director

"Staff morale and wellbeing is already being impacted given the national publicity on the scale of cost improvement. Many are worried about their jobs" Strategy director/strategy lead

FIGURE 4

How concerned are you that the actions you are having to take to focus on delivering operational priorities within the current financial envelope will compromise the following:

Patient experience



Note: chart displays selected variable from the full question.

- 45% of those surveyed were extremely (25%) or moderately (20%) concerned that the actions they are having to take will compromise patient experience.

Quotes

"We will always prioritise patient quality and safety." Chair

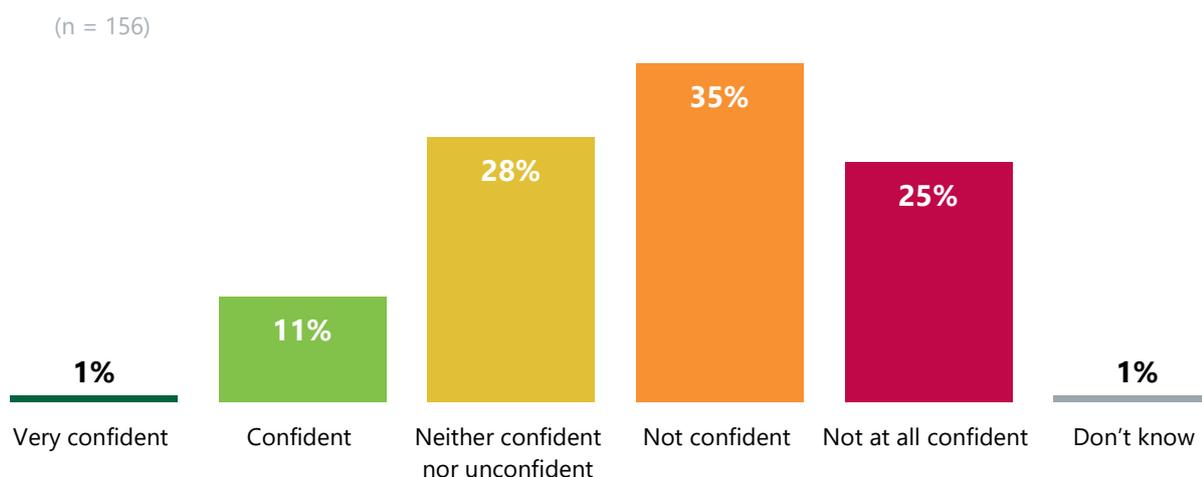
"Our plan is not to impact any of the above [quality, patient safety, patient experience, staff wellbeing]. But the scale of the ask is such that this is going to be very challenging to achieve."

Chief executive

FIGURE 5

How confident are you that your organisation has sufficient access to capital to deliver the following:

A positive environment for staff, patients and service users



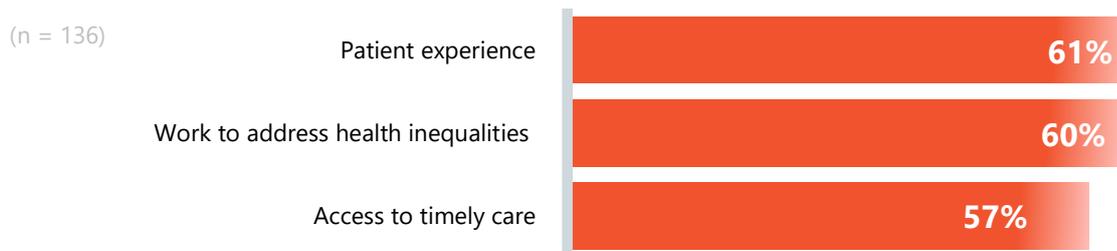
Note: chart displays selected variable from the full question.

- Only 12% of respondents were confident they have sufficient access to capital to deliver a positive environment for staff, patients and service users.

Aspects of patient care most at risk of being impacted to deliver financial plans

FIGURE 5

To deliver your financial plans for 2025/26, which aspects of patient care are most at risk of being impacted?



Note: chart displays excerpt of variables from the full multiple-choice question.

- Close to three in five respondents said patient experience (61%), work to address health inequalities (60%) and access to timely care (57%) were most at risk of being impacted.

Quotes

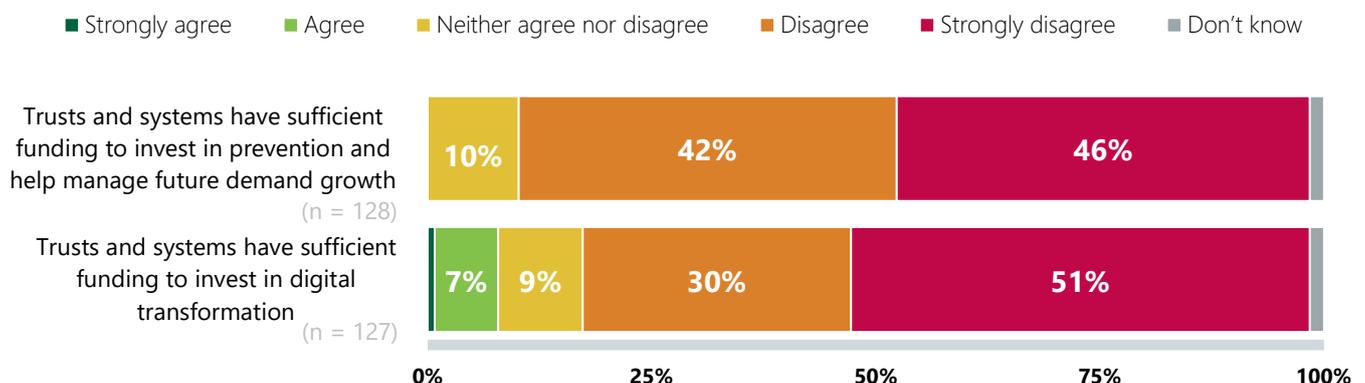
"Health inequalities is a real issue when streamlining services. We need investment to reach the most vulnerable and excluded populations, not disinvestment." Finance director

"Hard to say. We are doing all we can to mitigate. We have a hard red line around patient safety which will never be compromised." HR director

Agreement with the strategic direction of the NHS

FIGURE 6

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to the strategic direction of the NHS.



Note: chart displays selected variables from the full question.

- Nearly nine in ten (88%) members disagreed that trusts and systems have sufficient funding to invest in prevention and help manage future demand growth. There was no agreement with this statement from any respondents.
- Eight in ten (81%) surveyed disagreed that trusts and systems have sufficient funding to invest in digital transformation.

Quotes

"...I am focused on week by week priorities, not on strategic priorities like health inequalities. I am switching resources from long-term priorities to immediate, front-line issues." Chief executive

"The focus on cuts currently means that we have no capacity to shift from acute to community. There's no mechanism for re-investment." Chair

Contact details

If you have any questions regarding any of the material within this annex, then please contact NHS Providers press office at: press@nhsproviders.org