



Is bigger better? Lessons for large-scale general practice

2. Sustainability

About this booklet

From 2014-16, the Nuffield Trust undertook research that combined a literature review, national surveys and qualitative and quantitative analysis of case study sites.

All lessons are captured in four booklets. This booklet covers practice sustainability.

Booklets 1, 3 and 4 cover leadership and governance, working with the wider health economy, and improving quality.

Three activities can help practices remain sustainable in a larger group

- 1 Create operational efficiencies**
 - Centralise administrative tasks and, where appropriate, call handling and reception work
 - Introduce standardised processes and ways of working across all member practices
 - Pool resources and jointly procure
 - Do not expect to make significant cost savings or profits – there is little evidence that service use can be reduced or generate cost savings in integrated working – most profits are small and often reinvested into organisational development.¹

2 Use technology

- Use remote data extraction technologies to support centralised administration and performance monitoring
- Use phone apps and web technologies to transfer some tasks – such as prescription requests, and accessing test results – away from practice staff
- Use web technologies to support training and education across member practices.

3 Develop the practice and network workforce

- Broaden skills and roles across clinical and non-clinical staff to allow them to: a) provide cover across member practices – avoiding locum costs, b) take on new network-level roles, and c) offer new services to generate network income
- Decrease isolation through regular peer-led forums and enable real-time peer support and problem-solving through instant messaging.

Reference

- 1 Pettigrew L, Mays N, Kumpunen S and Rosen R (2016) *Large-scale general practice in England: what can we learn from the literature?* Nuffield Trust

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