



NHS chief says networking may be answer to working at scale

NHS Chief Executive Simon Stevens told the Health Select Committee earlier this month that “more networked approaches” can also be an answer to working “at scale”.

This places the NHS England position on at-scale provision closer to Londonwide LMCs’ consistent calls for an approach that does not involve forcing practices to form into larger organisations and instead leaves them the option of collaborating to serve larger patient populations, without relinquishing their own contracts.

Stevens went on to say: “There are enormous strengths in British general practice around continuity of care and list-based general practice, but there are some downsides, particularly around individual practices sometimes struggling in isolation from their neighbours.

“So there need to be much more networked approaches to working with other practices so that collectively they are looking after 30,000 to 50,000 people.

“Then you can put in place the mental health therapists alongside the GPs, the clinical pharmacists that we are directly funding, the practice nurses and so on.”

He also told MPs that the workforce crisis in primary care is real. He added: “I think was probably the first person doing my job to say outright, 18 months ago, that I did not feel GPs were crying wolf; I thought they had a point.

“We are about flat to slightly negative in whole-time equivalent GP numbers at the moment.”

Mr Stevens promised to go: “all guns blazing, on a GP international recruitment programme over the next three years, aiming to recruit up to 2,000 additional GPs from either the rest of the European Union or places like Australia.”