



Exclusive: ICBs to shrink to 27 clusters

By [Mimi Launder](#) | 5 June 2025

NHSE shares map of 27 ICBs with chief executives

A third to remain independent and several broken up entirely

Uncertainty remains over timetable for redundancies and leadership appointments

The consolidation of integrated care boards will result in the 42 organisations moving to 27 clusters, *HSJ* has learned.

Last week, *HSJ* analysed the [emerging proposals from ICBs](#), which suggested there would be between 25 and 28 ICB clusters.

HSJ now understands that Lincolnshire ICB will join the cluster being formed by the Derby and Derbyshire and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire boards (see map below for detail). Meanwhile, Humber and North Yorkshire ICB and South Yorkshire ICB will both remain independent.

Around a third of ICBs will be independent – largely in London, the North West, the North East and Yorkshire – after the clustering is complete. In these regions, all ICB boundaries are set to remain the same.

Frimley, Hertfordshire and West Essex, and Suffolk and North East Essex ICBs are to be dissolved entirely as part of the arrangements, with their geographies split between different clusters.

ICBs are clustering in order to halve their running costs by December, as demanded by government. They formally submitted their clustering and restructuring proposals to NHSE last week. NHSE said it expects clusters to [merge formally by April 2026, or by 12 months later at the latest](#).

* A Flourish map

Redundancies and appointments

A meeting with ICB chairs and CEOs yesterday heard that NHSE has not yet agreed an approach or timetable for appointing new leaders of ICBs or for deciding which staff will be retained in the

new struture.

ICB leaders shared concerns with *HSJ* about the speed and uncertainty surrounding the reconfiguration and restructures, and the lack of national coordination and process. *HSJ* understands that NHSE recognises these concerns and is seeking to adopt a process which moves things forward as quickly as possible. A decision on staffing may emerge in “a matter of weeks”.

This process is hampered by no agreement yet having been reached with the Treasury on how the cost of redundancies will be met.

NHSE reported in its board meeting last week that “[over half of ICB CEOs and chairs are very excited](#)” about the new model ICB blueprint – which hands over a swathe of their functions to providers, regions and national teams – as it is closer to how they initially saw the role. Around two dozen ICB chairs, CEOs and senior directors are closely involved in shaping the proposals, *HSJ* understands.

Many ICB leaders are sceptical that ICBs – even after clustering and merging – [will be able to run at the £18.76 per head of population cap set by NHSE](#). However, *HSJ* again understands that the first cut of the ICB proposals suggest this will be possible on a regional basis (ie that this would be the average spend across each of the seven regions, with individual ICBs having different totals, depending on their exact responsibilities).

Reconfigured ICBs	Estimated population
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes; with Hertfordshire (from Herts and West Essex)	3,298,928
Greater Manchester	3,296,216
Derby and Derbyshire; Lincolnshire; Nottingham and Nottinghamshire	3,257,873
North East and North Cumbria	3,242,302
Surrey Heartlands; Sussex; with additional parts of Surrey (from Frimley)	3,019,774
Birmingham and Solihull; Black Country	2,986,716
North West London	2,911,920
Cheshire and Merseyside	2,803,074
West Yorkshire	2,707,693
North East London	2,472,581
Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire; Dorset; Somerset	2,465,214
Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West, with Berkshire East (from Frimley)	2,413,976
South East London	2,126,421
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland; Northamptonshire	2,086,598
Kent and Medway	2,036,786
Mid and South Essex, with West Essex (from Herts and West Essex) and North East Essex (from Suffolk and North East Essex)	1,954,248
Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with small area of Hants (from Frimley)	1,981,006
Coventry and Warwickshire; Herefordshire and Worcestershire	1,952,628
Devon; Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	1,916,384
Lancashire and South Cumbria	1,870,895
Norfolk and Waveney; Suffolk (from Suffolk and North East Essex)	1,856,023
North Central London	1,826,034
Humber and North Yorkshire	1,821,422
Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; Gloucestershire	1,795,237
South West London	1,781,384
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent	1,747,123
South Yorkshire	1,532,710

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