Since many organisations failed to meet the admitted, non-admitted and/or incomplete pathway waiting-time standards, providers have to submit local recovery plans. To produce an effective plan you must start by understanding why the organisation finds itself in a failing position.

The following questions, compiled by NHS Improvement's Elective Care Intensive Support Team, are designed to help you do that.

**Are capacity and demand in balance?**

You need to understand in detail whether capacity and demand are in balance in all specialties and subspecialties.

**Where is the shortfall?**

Provide a clear and accurate picture of capacity, demand, activity and related removal other than treatment (ROTT) rates for appropriate elements of the pathway. Highlight the ‘gaps’ for a steady state position.

- **Are the pathways achievable in 18 weeks?**

**Key pathway milestones**

Do you understand the key pathway milestones for each subspecialty and whether the pathway fundamentally can be delivered in a maximum of 18 weeks? In simple terms, this should describe what should happen to the patient and in what order.

**Sustainable waiting list size**

Are the waiting lists a manageable size? Calculate the appropriate size of waiting list that can be held at each key pathway milestone. For example, if a provider wants all surgical patients to have a first outpatient appointment by week 6, what is the maximum size of list that could be held for that to happen for both urgent and routine patients?

This clearly indicates the size of the backlog to be reduced to gain a sustainable position.

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1 The term ‘provider’ in this guide refers to both NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts.
Supplementary issues

Supplementary issues involved in failing to meet the standards include data quality and operational management and understanding.

Recovery plan content

Once you understand the scale of the issues and why the organisation is not achieving the standards, the plan should include in detail:

- governance, leadership and assurance
- data quality
- eliminating lengthy waits
- sustainable improvement: aligning capacity and demand, access policy and standard operating procedures update and training
- managing clinical risk
- performance management
- communications
- risks and mitigations.

The plan needs sufficient detail to explain how the problems will be addressed and should include realistic timelines.

The plan should relate to a line of development that defines numerically how the problem will be resolved. It should be reviewed weekly.