



NHS England - Cumbria and North East
Waterfront 4
Newburn Riverside
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE15 8NY
Email address – t.rideout@nhs.net

Dr Neil O'Brien,
Clinical Chief Officer
North Durham CCG
The Rivergreen Centre
Aykley Heads
Durham
DH1 5TS

Telephone Number – 0113 825 1507

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Dear Neil

Clinical Commissioning Group Annual Assurance 2014/15

Many thanks for meeting with us on 30th June 2015 to discuss the annual assessment of North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and establish the actions and development priorities for the coming year. This letter is a summary of the assurance meetings that we have held over the last year and provides a synopsis of the improvements and ambitions for future development laid out against the assurance domains. This is the final review using the six domains. Subsequent assurance meetings will be held on the basis of the new assurance framework with its five components: well led organisation, delegated functions, performance & outcomes, financial management and planning.

I am grateful to you and your team for the work you had done to prepare for the meeting and the open and transparent nature of our dialogue which has led to productive discussions. This letter sets out the key points we covered in the discussion outlined above.

Key Areas of Strength / Areas of Good Practice

We would like to acknowledge the overall progress the CCG has made to date with the ongoing establishment of the organisation and in addressing local issues and challenges. The work in relation to major strategic and service transformation is complex and challenging. However there is evidence of positive relationships with key strategic partners. We acknowledge the significant progress made in engaging with clinical leaders and the strength of clinical leadership at all levels, and note the good position of the safeguarding agenda. You have detailed the support that you have been receiving from the North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) including progress through quarter 4 and into quarter 1 2015/16 to progress the commissioning of support services for 2016/17 and potential use of the Lead Provider Framework.

You explained the substantial progress that the CCG has made during 2014/15 across a range of issues and initiatives, with examples such as Home Equipment Loans Service re-procurement, frail elderly strategy, Intermediate care⁺, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) crisis service, and the Crisis Care Concordat.

The CCG has, and continues to place clear emphasis on organisational development and has invested considerable resources into the development of federated practices.

Action: *CCG to maintain progress with initiatives for the community.*

NHS Constitution standards

Key indicators within the NHS England delivery dashboard have shown some improvements throughout the year, in particular around mental health. However we acknowledged ongoing challenges in delivery of some NHS Constitutional Standards notably accident and emergency waiting times, diagnostics, handover delays and cancer 62 day waits.

Quality issues including 12 hour breaches, healthcare acquired infections (HCAI) and serious incidents continue to prove a challenge.

A framework is needed to focus on quality and performance issues regarding 'Friends and Family' test, diagnostics, referral to treatment (RTT), cancer 62 day and activity management, this should also include financial control.

Action: *CCG to focus on key performance and quality priorities and meet constitutional standards.*

Action: *Framework to be developed and shared with NHS England by the end August.*

Five Year Forward View

During the year we have discussed the CCG's vision for primary and out-of-hospital care along with geographic and patient flow. The CCG needs to adapt its local strategy to incorporate the Five Year Forward View into a clear long term plan and we are expecting to see timescales by which this will be shared for discussion. We acknowledge the development within Primary Care though there is a need to bring this together into a collective sense of overall direction.

Action: *CCG to translate local strategy into a clear long term plan.*

Action: *CCG to work up vision for primary care by December 2015.*

NHS Statutory Duties

We have received your annual report and accounts and through these reports are assured that the CCG is meeting all of its statutory duties.

Discussions throughout the year have demonstrated the focus and action taken within the CCG on addressing parity of esteem that has seen significant

improvements for the local population. This is a key element of the CCGs strategic plans. A County Durham Mental Health Implementation Plan of the National Strategy, No Health without Mental Health, has been developed and approved by the CCG Governing Body. The priorities outlined in the plan will be delivered over a 3 year period.

The approach is further evidenced in the crisis care concordat work in which a key element is ensuing parity of esteem for mental health crisis services.

We also recognise the significant time and effort that has gone into collaboration to develop partnership arrangements, notably with Durham County Council Public Health Team through the CCG memorandum of understanding and through membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment to the work of the Local Health Resilience Partnership in the past year and in particular the undertaking of the on-call provision, a major component of your role as a Category 2 Responder as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act.

You may recall in her letter of the 20th May 2015, the NHS England National Director of NHS Operations and Delivery, set out the expectations for the 2015-16 EPRR assurance process which NHS England will use in order to be assured that NHS England and the NHS in England are prepared to respond to an emergency and has resilience in relation to continuing to provide safe patient care. As in the 2014 – 15 assurance process, this year's self-assessment against the NHS England core-standards is a fundamental element of how your CCG is prepared to respond to an emergency and I would wish to thank you in advance of the October submission date for your support in undertaking this vital piece of work.

Action: *CCG to maintain and enhance relationships with partners.*

Key Areas of Challenge

The CCG has outlined key areas of challenge for the year ahead, including delivering the necessary efficiencies and maintaining the constitutional standards given competing pressures. A more productive relationship with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) is required to deliver the constitutional standards and better outcomes for patients. It was agreed that NHS England would convene a joint meeting with CCGs to discuss a joint approach to CDDFT.

The current system is unsustainable and collectively there is a need to focus on the reconfiguration required. There is potential for an Acute Collaboration Vanguard bid submission, as well as a requirement to fully engage in the Securing Quality in Hospital Services (SeQiHS) work programme.

We acknowledge that all of these challenges are fully recognised with appropriate risk mitigation plans in place.

Action: *CCG to monitor activity closely during 2015/16.*

Key Interdependencies and Associated Issues

The CCG is keen to progress the primary care agenda in order to support the vision that you have for transforming services over the next five years. We commend the federated approach taken by the CCG and look forward to good progress with the operating model.

The close working relationship with Durham Dales Easington and Sedgefield (DDES) CCG in particular, that has developed over the year through the joint unit of planning and the partnership working with the local authority has been strengthened further through the Better Care Fund work.

Action: CCG to maintain positive work with partners.

CCG Transformational Programmes

We acknowledge the work the CCG has started to transform out-of-hospital care and heard your plans to strengthen primary care provision. We also heard your CCG's thoughts on the need for transformational change in the hospital sector and the progress of the Securing Quality in Health Services programme (SeQiHS). Finally we discussed the need for your CCG to engage with neighbouring CCGs (in particular Newcastle-Gateshead CCG and Sunderland CCG) to ensure that their plans for hospital sector transformational change are understood and align with your own. This is particularly important where neighbouring CCG plans are likely to impact on North Durham patients through either their geographical proximity or in relation to natural patient flows.

To ensure that NHS England in Cumbria and the North East is best placed to support CCGs as they develop and implement their transformational plans and that our approach to assurance is proportionate and value-adding, I am aligning a named NHS England Director to be each CCG's first point of contact. In this instance, Alison Slater, Director of Delivery will be your link-director.

Action: CCG to work with the other CCGs in the Durham, Darlington and Tees area to ensure the SeQiHS Programme has proposals ready to consult on from April 2016.

Development Needs and Agreed Actions

The overall assurance category for the CCG following the local Quarter 4 review and completion of the regional/national moderation process is assured with support. Assessment against the individual domains is noted below.

Domain	Assurance rating
1. Are patients receiving clinically commissioned, high quality services?	Assured
2. Are patients and the public actively engaged and involved?	Assured
3. Are CCG plans delivering better outcomes for patients?	Assured with support
4. Does the CCG have robust governance arrangements?	Assured
5. Are CCGs working in partnership with others?	Assured
6. Does the CCG have strong and robust leadership?	Assured

The CCG has made good progress particularly around clinical leadership and work with member practices toward federated model. We indicated a key message around system sustainability and delivery of key constitutional targets.

The six domains of the outgoing assurance framework still provide a platform for continuing organisational development of the CCG and they also will inform the well led organisation component of the new assurance framework.

Action: *Guidance for new assurance framework to be shared with CCG as soon as published.*

Overall we would like to congratulate you on the progress you have made over the last year and the achievements you have made.

Thank you again to you and your team for meeting with us and for the open and constructive dialogue. I hope this letter provides an accurate summary of our discussions and notes the areas for ongoing development going forward. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the health and wellbeing of the residents of North Durham.

Yours sincerely

Tim Rideout
Director of Commissioning Operations