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Dear Alistair,

Clinical Commissioning Group Annual Assurance 2014/15

Many thanks for meeting with us on 1st July 2015 to discuss the annual assessment of Northumberland 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 and 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, but there is evidence of strong CCG leadership and evolving positive relationships with key strategic partners who are working collectively towards an ambitious vision. When successfully delivered the vision will see significant improvements to the provision of care to the local population.

You have noted the positive support that you have been receiving from the North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) and the significant progress made with review of support requirements received.

You explained the substantial progress that the CCG has made during 2014/15 across a range of issues and initiatives, such as the Better Care Fund programme which focusses on reducing non elective activity for patients in care homes and at the end of

their lives. Excellent progress was made in Q4 preparing the analysis and understanding of the priorities which helped a number of programmes to achieve the targets including, a dedicated GP helpline in place for care homes and end of life patients and the care homes medication review programme.

NHS England also recognises the CCG's strong public and patient engagement and partnership working. Northumberland's Patient Testing Panel ensures commissioning plans meet patient expectation and puts patient's voices at the heart of decision making. You have established a systematic framework for patient engagement by pulling together 45 patient participation groups (one in each GP practice) through a locality structure and ultimately at county wide level. This has been recognised as excellent practice by both the Health and Well Being Board and the Integration Board.

The CCG has, and continues to place clear emphasis on organisational development (OD) demonstrated in a comprehensive OD plan. The CCG is working towards filling the gaps in nursing capacity and has appointed a Director of Quality.

Action: *CCG to continuously reflect on OD plan throughout 2015/16.*

NHS Constitution standards

Key indicators within the NHS England Delivery Dashboard have shown strong performance throughout the year, and it was very positive to hear about your approach to joint working with your local providers to tackle the ambulance response times and healthcare associated infections (HCAI) performance issues.

Breast cancer referral times continue to prove a challenge locally, although we recognise that this is primarily because of the unique pathway within Northumberland that sees symptomatic and none symptomatic patients all assessed within two weeks. You explained the in depth analysis undertaken, which has indicated that breaches are a result of patient choice, and the validation exercise undertaken by a CCG Director.

Action: *CCG to continue to maintain constitutional standards and focus on breast cancer pathways and ambulance response times.*

Five Year Forward View

The CCG has started work to adapt its local strategy to incorporate the Five Year Forward View into its work. This has still to translate into a clear long term plan to implement the Five Year Forward view and we are expecting to see timescales by which this will be shared for discussion. It will be important to build on engagement with your membership as well as that with your NHS and local government partners to develop this plan, which will also need to set out your approach to public engagement. The successful Vanguard bid will help communities to live long and healthy lives at home, supported through the opening of the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital, and an extension of primary care to create 'hubs' of primary care provision across the county seven days a week.

Action: *CCG to work on engagement and translate local strategy into a clear long term plan.*

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 and has seen significant improvements for the local population. The radical transformation programme that Northumberland Tyne (NTW) and Wear Mental Health Foundation Trust is engaged in will systematically reduce the inpatient bed base and shift resources into the community. This programme will form the main stay of the financial recovery programme in Northumberland.

We acknowledge the work done around out of area placements noting that placements have been significantly reduced through a partnership agreement that was set up in April 2014 with NTW. Also, that savings made have been reinvested in a new Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) service and urgent response team. We commend the CCG that over 75% of patients have been repatriated to Northumberland, each with improved packages of care.

Significant time and effort has gone into collaboration to developing the partnership arrangements with partner organisations notably Northumberland County Council.

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

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

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. We discussed the relative fragility of the financial position but acknowledge work undertaken to date and the ongoing progress towards financial recovery.

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

Action: CCG to maintain focus on financial recovery and seek to fully deliver financial business rules in line with the agreed 2016/17 trajectory.

Key Interdependencies and Associated Issues

The CCG are keen to progress the primary care agenda in order to support the vision for transforming services over the next five years. The CCG needs to develop a long term vision for Primary Care.

Action: CCG to develop a vision for primary care.

CCG Transformational Programmes

We saw the considerable amount of work the CCG has undertaken to transform out-of-hospital care and heard your plans to strengthen primary care provision. We also heard the beginning of your Primary and Acute Care System Vanguard journey that you hope will ultimately lead to an Accountable Care Organisation focussed on the improvement of population-based health outcomes for the people of Northumberland.

To ensure that NHS England in Cumbria and the North East is best placed to support CCGs as they develop and implement 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 as a first point of contact. In this instance, Christine Keen, Director of Commissioning will be your link-director.

Action: CCG to consider the following areas by the end of August 2015 to help with the developing the assurance arrangements for transformational change;

- The leadership arrangements (both clinical and managerial) for transformational plans;
- Local governance arrangements that reflect the transformational vehicle being used to deliver plans;
- The overall timeline and the key milestones within the transformational programme; and
- How to secure the necessary support, capacity and capability to deliver your programme.

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 and we note the ambition of Northumberland CCG although recognising challenges ahead. We reiterate our support from NHS England for the CCG.

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 Northumberland.

Yours sincerely



Tim Rideout
Director of Commissioning Operations