Item: 10

North East and North Cumbria

REPORT CLASSIFICATION	✓	CATEGORY OF PAPER	✓
Official	✓	Proposes specific action	
Official: Sensitive Commercial		Provides assurance	✓
Official: Sensitive Personal		For information only	

BOARD

29 July 2026

Report Title:	**Board Assurance Framework and Risk Management Report – Quarter 1, 2026/27**

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with a refreshed Board Assurance Framework for quarter one, 2026/27 and an updated corporate risk register for review and consideration.

Key points

The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring systems and controls are in place and sufficient to mitigate any significant risks which may threaten the achievement of the ICB's strategic aims and objectives. The Board achieves this primarily through the work of its committees, through use of audit, independent inspections and by systematic collection and scrutiny of performance data.

The Board Assurance Framework (BAF) is used to provide assurance on the management of key risks to the delivery of the ICB's strategic aims and objectives as well as the wider strategic goals of the Integrated Care Partnership. The BAF is reviewed by the Leadership, Audit Committee and Quality and Safety Committees before submission to the Board.

The BAF is intended to provide a visible strategic risk summary, supported by the full detail of the corporate risk register.

The Board also receives the corporate risk register on a quarterly basis which includes risks identified by the ICB and via committee risk registers as being 'high or very high' and risks identified at a place-based/neighbourhood level scored 12 and above.

The following appendices are attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - refreshed BAF for quarter one, 2026/27
- Appendix 2 – corporate risk register, an overview of all ICB risks with a residual risk score of 12 and above
- Appendix 3 – details of ICB place/neighbourhood risks with a residual risk score of 12 and above

Risks and issues

Risks are mapped to the goals identified in the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Partnership strategy 'Better health and wellbeing for all' and from these goals the principal risks to the strategy have been identified as:

1. **The ICB fails to commission services in a way that tackles the wider causes of ill health, and life expectancy of people within the North East and North Cumbria is not improving.**

The gap between how long people live in the North East and North Cumbria compared to the rest of England is not on track to reduce by 10% by 2030. Overall risk rated as 12 A (high).

2. **Our health and care services are not delivered in a way in which improves the outcomes of communities who currently have much poorer health outcomes.**
   The gap between the inequality in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at birth between people living in the most deprived and least deprived 20% of communities is not on track to narrow by 10% by 2030. Overall risk rated as 15 A (high).

3. **The quality of commissioned health and care services varies across the ICB area and in some places falls below our high expectations for our public and patients.**
   The ICB does not maintain it's good or outstanding rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the percentage of regulated services across social care, primary care and secondary care that are rated as good or outstanding by the CQC is declining. Overall risk rated as 16 A (high).

4. **We fail to deliver health and care services which give children the best start in life.**
   The percentage of children with good school readiness when they join the reception class (including children from disadvantaged groups) is declining. Overall risk rated as 16 A (high).

Assurances and supporting documentation

The report is in line with the ICB's Risk Management Strategy: icbp037-risk-management-strategy-5.pdf

Recommendation/action required

The Board is asked to:

- Satisfy itself that the BAF accurately reflects the principal risks to achieving the ICB's objectives as well as the current mitigations.
- Approve the BAF for quarter one, 2026/27 (appendix 1):
- Receive the corporate risk register (appendices 2 and 3) and for assurance.

Acronyms and abbreviations explained

BAF – Board Assurance Framework
CRR – Corporate Risk Register
AC – Audit Committee
LMNS - Local Maternity and Neonatal System
NHSE – NHS England
FOI - Freedom of Information
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
VCSE - Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise
SI – Serious Incident
LeDeR - Learning from lives and deaths – people with a learning disability and autistic people
SVOC - System Vaccination Operations Centre

Sponsor/approving executive director	C Riley, Chief Corporate Services Officer
Date approved by executive director	16 July 2026
Reviewed by	D Cornell, Director of Corporate Governance and Board Secretary
Report author	N Hawkins, Strategic Head of Corporate Governance

Link to ICP strategy priorities (please tick all that apply)

Longer and Healthier Lives	✓
Fairer Outcomes for All	✓

Better Health and Care Services						✓
Giving Children and Young People the Best Start in Life						✓
Relevant legal/statutory issues						
Any potential/actual conflicts of interest associated with the paper? (please tick)	**Yes**		**No**		**N/A**	✓
Equality analysis completed (please tick)	**Yes**		**No**		**N/A**	✓
If there is an expected impact on patient outcomes and/or experience, has a quality impact assessment been undertaken? (please tick)	**Yes**		**No**	✓	**N/A**	

Key considerations	
Financial implications and considerations	**Has there been appropriate finance involvement if any financial implications:** NA If Yes:
	Total Contract Value/Cost (including any options to extend the contract): NA
	Approval name: NA
	Approval Date: NA
Contracting and Procurement	Has there been appropriate contracting/procurement involvement or advice? Not applicable
Commissioning Team	Not applicable
Digital implications	Not applicable
Clinical involvement	Not applicable
Health inequalities	Not applicable
Patient and public involvement	Not applicable
Partner and/or other stakeholder engagement	Not applicable
Other resources	Not applicable

Board Assurance Framework 2026/27 (Quarter 1 26/27) and Risk Management Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring systems and controls are in place, sufficient to mitigate any significant risks which may threaten the achievement of the ICB's strategic aims and objectives. Evidence may be gained from a wide range of sources, but it should be systematic, supported by evidence, independently verified and incorporated within a robust governance process. The Board achieves this primarily through the work of its committees, through use of audit, independent inspections and by systematic collection and scrutiny of performance data.

2. Board Assurance Framework for 2026/27

2.1 The ICB manages risk across five levels with the principal risks to achieving the ICB's objectives forming the Board Assurance Framework (BAF):

1. Place/Neighbourhood
2. Area
3. Directorate
4. Executive directors (corporate risks)
5. Board Assurance Framework

2.2 Risks are considered at their corresponding committees to provide the Board with assurance that risks are reviewed individually by risk owners and also collectively by an oversight committee.

2.3 The ICB's risks have been assessed against the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) strategy, *Better Health and Wellbeing for All*, to determine their impact on achieving the vision and goals of the strategy. The outcome of the assessment has been incorporated into the BAF for 2026/27.

2.4 The BAF and risk register are aligned with the ICB's published NENC Five Year Strategic Commissioning Plan and structured around the Ten-Year ICP Strategy. The BAF continues to align to the ICB's four strategic outcomes which set ambitious improvement targets for 2030 as follows:

- Goal 1: Longer and healthier lives
- Goal 2: Fairer outcomes for all
- Goal 3: Better health and care services
- Goal 4: Giving children and young people the best start in life

2.4 Each goal has been reviewed to determine an overarching or principal risk to its achievement and then each corporate risk has been aligned to one of the four risks to determine the overall risk score. In summary, the risks to each goal are:

ICS Goal	Previous overall score	Current overall score
Longer and healthier lives	12	12
Fairer outcomes for all	15	15
Better health and care services	16	16
Giving children and young people the best start in life	16	16

2.5 The updated BAF for Q1 2026/27 is available at Appendix 1. The BAF is monitored through the Leadership, Audit and Quality and Safety Committees before submission to the Board. Once the Strategic Commissioning Assurance Committee is established, the BAF will also be reviewed at that Committee before coming to the Board.

3. Further Developing the BAF and Risk Register

3.1 As the ICB moves into its role as a strategic commissioner, further work is underway to review the BAF, risk register and risk management strategy to ensure they reflect this change (including the three left shifts – from hospital to community; from analogue to digital; and, from sickness to prevention) and ensure the governance framework continues to provide the right level of assurance to the Board.

3.2 Work continues with regards to the ICB's risk management system (SIRMS) and the transition from NECS as the current host and licence holder of the system. The ICB has procured its own licence for SIRMS and the data transfer from the NECS system is currently in progress as NECS transitions towards closedown. Having its own system and being the licence holder will enable improved functionality and better risk reporting for the ICB going forwards.

4. Risk movement

4.1 Appendix two provides an overview of the current corporate risk register showing those ICB risks with a residual risk score of 12 and above.

4.2 There has been movement in the following risk during this reporting period:

- **NENC/0047** - High rates of suspected suicides. The rates of suicide in the North East and North Cumbria are the highest in the country at 13.4 per 100,000 people. Suicide is the leading cause of death in our region for men aged 15 - 49 and women aged 20-34.
  The risk to the ICB is that we do not reduce the suicide rate for people in contact with NHS commissioned and health care delivery services, amenable to healthcare preventative efforts.

  Following review by the risk owner and updates to the controls and assurances in place, the risk score was reduced to 9 (from 12). As the risk is scored below 12, the risk is below the threshold to be included on the corporate risk register and will be monitored locally by the risk owner and responsible director.

5. New corporate risks

5.1 There were two new corporate risks added to the corporate risk register this reporting period:

- **NENC/0136** - GP Collective Action BMA Advice. GP Practices on advice from BMA have served notice on data sharing agreements for secondary uses that are not contracted or linked directly to patient care. The risk is that GP practice data flows into the ICB will be disrupted / paused / ceased as a result. If GP data flows are reduced or withdrawn this will directly impact the availability and timeliness of data across key ICB intelligence functions including datasets that feed core reporting.

This will therefore result in a lack of refreshed data to support commissioning decisions, performance oversight, and statutory reporting. In addition, operational tools reliant on primary care data, including the RAIDR platform, will not receive updated information, impacting its effectiveness in supporting direct patient care. Risk is scored 12 (high).

- **NENC/0133** – Cyber-attack (international actors). Cyber incidents causing real and significant risk to the delivery of care, with the IT and operational response in recovery period likely to be protracted. These risks may not be limited to individual organisations: they will likely affect all or multiple sites and or partners across the integrated care system. Risk is scored 12 (high).

6. Closed risks

6.1 The following corporate risks have been closed during the reporting period:

- **NENC/0129** - Failure to secure ongoing funding for Connect NENC digital referral system. Connect NENC has been in place one year and provides a secure digital portal to support safe, structured referrals between specialist services across the region (for example, from district general hospitals to tertiary specialist units). The system enables specialties to configure bespoke referral forms, ensuring that the correct and complete clinical information is provided at the point of referral. It also creates a clear, auditable record of requests and specialist responses, allowing advice and decisions to be accurately documented and reliably actioned. Funding has now been secured to continue with the digital referral system. As a result, the risk has reduced in score and subsequently closed.

- **NENC/0021** – NHS England (NHSE) Screening and Immunisation TUPE to the ICB and the NECS closure following the NHSE Transition Team announcement. For delivery of the COVID programme in 2026/27, the ICB will need to manage the risk associated with Spring/Autumn delivery considering the ICB blueprint, the model region and Office of Pan ICB Commissioning (OPIC) changes. The risk has been reviewed and closed by the risk owner. The NHSE team will transfer into the OPIC in April 2027 and has agreed the next steps for the Systems Vaccination Operation Centre for 2026/27 before those functions also transfer to the OPIC in April 2027.

- **NENC/0111** - Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) funding allocations. LMNS funding for trusts has now been confirmed and there will be no reduction from 2025/26. The LMNS clinical leadership will also continue in its current state for 2026/27. As funding has been confirmed, this risk has been closed.

- **NENC/0118** - Missing maternity records incident - System C (BadgerNet). The ICB was made aware of a major incident on 22 September 2025 which impacted five of eight NENC trusts whereby when a number of women's records were updated within BadgetNet. The updates had not saved within the system resulting in lost information. Harm reviews have been competed in respect of all missing records, and no issues have been identified. Due to no ongoing issues with the identified missing records, this risk has been closed.

7. Place (Neighbourhood) high and extreme risks

7.1 Appendix 3 provides full details of those place (neighbourhood) risks with a current residual score of 12 or above. There is currently one risk with a residual score of 12 or above as follows:

- **PLACE/0042**: Autism diagnosis and post diagnosis support Diagnosis and/or post diagnosis support for autistic people is not provided timely or effectively, caused by insufficient resource or poor service provision. The risk is that this results in patient detriment, reputation damage or regulator enforcement. There is an excepted increase in the waiting lists for assessments as the service is not carrying out any assessments due to COVID-19 risk. This includes adults and children and young people.

7.2 The responsible officer has been updated for this risk to reflect the revised ICB operating model.

8. Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- Satisfy itself that the BAF accurately reflects the principal risks to achieving our objectives as well as their current mitigations.
- Approve the BAF for quarter one, 2026/27 (appendix 1):
- Receive the corporate risk register (appendices 2 and 3) and for assurance.

Name of Sponsoring Director: Claire Riley, Chief Corporate Officer

Reviewed by: Deb Cornell, Director of Corporate Governance, Communications and Involvement (Board Secretary)

Name of Author: Neil Hawkins, Strategic Head of Corporate Governance

Date: 17 July 2026