

Item: 10

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

BOARD

25 NOVEMBER 2025

Report Title:

**Board Assurance Framework and Risk Management
Report – Q2 2025/26 position**

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with a refreshed Board Assurance Framework for quarter two, 2025/26 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, 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. It 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' scored 12 and above.

The following appendices are attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - refreshed BAF for quarter 2, 2025/26
- Appendix 2 – corporate risk register, an overview of all ICB risks with a residual risk score of 12 and above.
- Appendix 3 – updated risk management strategy for approval – minor amends to the strategy document following the approval of the Board risk appetite statement.

The BAF is reviewed regularly by the Executive, Audit, Quality and Safety and Finance, Performance and Investment Committees before submission to the Board. The corporate risk register is also reviewed regularly by the Audit and Executive Committees and, depending on the nature of the risk, by the Quality and Safety and Finance, Performance and Investment Committees.

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 20 A (extreme).
- 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 its 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 20 R (extreme).
- 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

The report is in line with the [ICB's Risk Management Strategy](#)

Recommendation/action required

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 2, 2025/26;
- Receive and review the corporate risk register for assurance.
- Approve the minor amends to the risks management strategy (following the approval of the Board risk appetite statement).

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

Sponsor/approving executive director	C Riley, Chief Corporate Services Officer					
Date approved by executive director	25.09.25					
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						
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						
Note any relevant Acts, regulations, national guidelines etc						
Any potential/actual conflicts of interest associated with the paper?	Yes		No		N/A	✓
If yes, please specify						
Equality analysis completed	Yes		No		N/A	✓
If there is an expected impact on patient outcomes and/or experience, has a quality impact assessment been undertaken?	Yes		No	✓	N/A	
Key considerations						
Financial implications and considerations	None identified					
Contracting and Procurement	None identified					
Local Delivery Team	None identified					
Digital implications	None identified					
Clinical involvement	None identified					
Health inequalities	None identified					
Patient and public involvement	None identified					
Partner and/or other stakeholder engagement	None identified					
Other resources	None identified					

Board Assurance Framework 2025/26 (Quarter 2) and Risk Management Report

1. Introduction

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. Developing the Board Assurance Framework

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

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.

Further to the publication of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Partnership strategy, the ICB's risks have been assessed to determine their impact on achieving the vision and goals of the strategy and these have been incorporated into the BAF for 2025/26.

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.

The updated BAF for Q2 2025/26 is available at Appendix 1. The BAF is monitored through the Executive, Audit, Quality and Safety and Finance, Performance and Investment Committees before submission to the Board.

All ICB risks are assessed against the Integrated Care System's goals with the highest risk score used to determine the overall risk to the achievement of each goal.

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	20	20
Better health and care services	20	20
Giving children and young people the best start in life	16	16

3. Risk movement

- **NENC/0027** - There is a risk that children and young people are unable to access mental health services they need in a timely manner. 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 now scored below 12, the risk no longer meets the criteria for inclusion on the corporate risk register and will be managed locally.
- **NENC/0032** - Management of ICB running costs position. Following review by the risk owner and updates to the controls and assurances in place, the risk score was increased to 12 (from 8) to reflect the strategic commissioning transition programme and the risks surrounding transition. As the risk is now scored 12, the risk has been escalated for reporting within the corporate risk register and Board Assurance Framework.
- **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, including an identified gap in treatment for children and young people aged 0-24 years who self-harm and therefore at higher risk of suicide, the risk score was increased to 12 (from 9). As the risk is now scored 12, the risk has been escalated for reporting within the corporate risk register and Board Assurance Framework.

4. New corporate risks

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

- **NENC/0109** – ISFE 2, the new national finance and accounting system for ICBs is due to go live on 1 October 2025. There is a risk around the resource and capacity within the ICB to manage the implementation of the system at a time of significant change, together with a risk around continued delays in the national process which could result in system issues at go-live and potential delays in payments to suppliers. Risk scored 12 (high).
- **NENC/0111** – Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) funding allocations. Although 25/26 LMNS funding has been confirmed, there is a reduction in the funding advised by the NHS England national team vs the allocations actually received. This does not impact the 8 NENC Provider Trusts as their allocations remain the same as previous year. However, the ICB are unable to confirm if this will continue in future financial years, in line with the ICB Strategic Commissioning Transition Programme. Risk scored 12 (high).
- **NENC/0112** – NECS closure impact. As a result of the decision to close all Commissioning Support Units (CSUs) nationally, there is a risk that the services currently provided by the North of England Care System Support (NECS) through the agreed service level agreement (SLA) with the ICB do not transfer successfully to the ICB before NECS closure. In addition, the capacity and skills within NECS may be lost through staff leaving the organisation, leaving vital systems vulnerable (e.g. GPIT, RAIDR, SIRMS). Risk scored 15 (high).

- **NENC/0116** - Out of Hospital Team redeployment to All-Age Continuing Care (AACC). Three members of out of hospital team have been redeployed into AACC. This increases the risk that we would be unable to triage/respond to issues concerns raised across care home nursing environments and primary medical care. Resulting in reduction in patient care and increased risk of safeguarding issues. Risk scored 12 (high).

5. Closed risks

- **NENC/0025** – Significant workforce pressures in maternity services across the system. Risk closed following discussions at the Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) Programme Delivery Group in July with a view to additional risks being identified which are clinical speciality specific rather than maternity workforce specific.
- **NENC/0052** – British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) termination of pregnancy pathways receiving 'inadequate' Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating. Risk reviewed and closed - risk is being managed through contract management route and business as usual processes.

6. 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 2, 2025/26;
- Receive and review the corporate risk register for assurance.
- Approve the minor amends to the risks management strategy (following the approval of the Board risk appetite statement).

Name of Sponsoring Director: Claire Riley, Chief Corporate Services Officer

Reviewed by: Deb Cornell, Director of Corporate Governance, and Board Secretary

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Date: 22 September 2025