



North East and
North Cumbria

Longer and healthier lives for all...

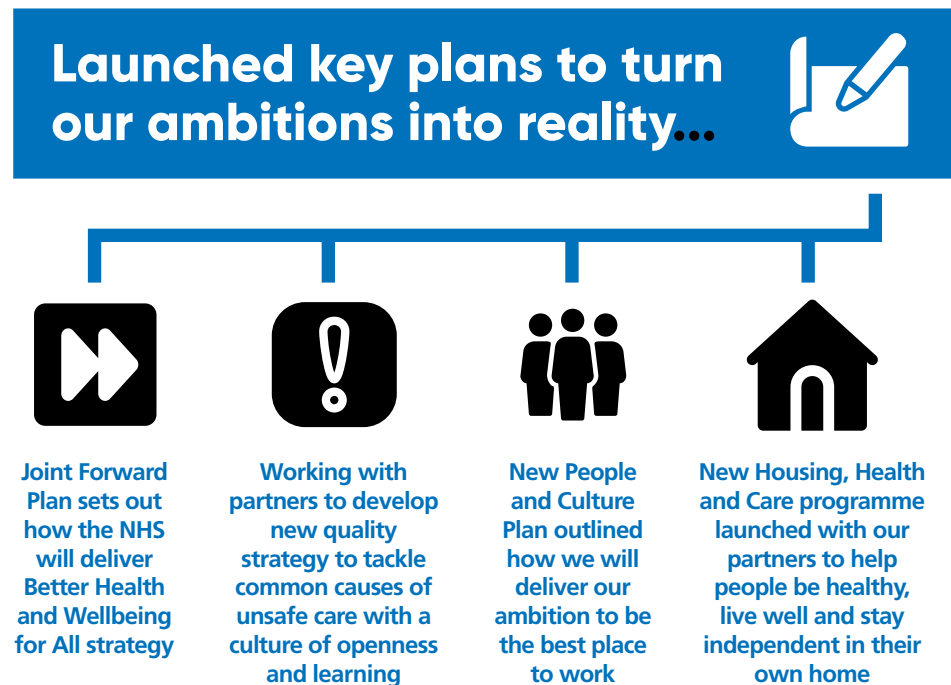


Annual report summary
2023-24

Highlights of our year...





We are proud of our strong partnerships and collaborative working. None of the highlights below were achieved in isolation – whether it's GP practices, NHS trusts and pharmacists, our Provider Collaborative, local authorities and voluntary sector or others, everything we do is stronger because it's done in partnership.

Together we have:



Improved access to primary care services...



 <p>Delivered 39,000 Pharmacy First consultations in the first 11 weeks – most in England</p>	 <p>Invested £3m to retain, stabilise and protect NHS dentistry</p>
<p>£1.3m</p> <p>Committed £1.3m for urgent dental services in Darlington and Carlisle</p>	 <p>Supported practices to tackle the '8am rush' – with better access through the NHS app and improved telephony</p>
 <p>30,000 women had quicker access to UTI treatment through the community pharmacy scheme – saving £1.2m on GP appointments</p>	

Improved health and care for patients...



Invested £2m in alcohol care teams - now in all our NHS trusts



£9m new Urgent Treatment Centre opened at James Cook University Hospital



Worked to improve health through digital care, including a three-year digital diagnostics programme led by the Provider Collaborative



Worked with our ambulance trusts to improve Category 2 ambulance performance by 10 minutes year on year



Supported 9,000 people waiting for surgery through Waiting Well scheme



Invested in early mental health help and support through voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

Fairer healthcare for women and girls...



Launched our women's health programme

Held our first ever women's health conference

Invested £600,000 in three new women's health hubs in Sunderland, Gateshead and North Cumbria

Managing winter...

Invested £1m in extra care navigators in emergency departments

Extra work to prevent falls and admissions caused by frailty

Invested £1.5m in 42 hubs helping people with respiratory illnesses



Worked to be the best at getting better...



7,000 members have joined Boost, our learning and improvement community



Launched a discharge and safe transfer of care collaborative to improve the safety, experience, and outcomes of patients

Chair's foreword

Professor Sir Liam Donaldson



After a very hard year, my gratitude goes to everyone working in health and care for their commitment to the highest standards of care for the three million people we serve.

It is only two years since our Integrated Care Board (ICB) was formed, but our strategic discussions, partnerships and programmes are fully engaged as we work collectively to address the wider determinants of health such as poverty, housing, and economic development, as well as some of the biggest killers like smoking and alcohol.

As a new organisation, we have not had as much time as we would have liked to focus on population health and prevention. We also have the challenge of balancing our long-term ambitions against more immediate actions to improve access to services for patients and address the rising tide of urgent and acute illnesses, as well as our recovery from the pandemic.

We have made inroads, but we have to make space to get to grips with prevention and the root causes of poor health and inequalities. This is of crucial significance to the health and wellbeing of future generations.

Patient safety and high-quality care

All of us care deeply about ensuring our patients are protected from avoidable harm. It's something that I am passionate about and we have an opportunity to do even more to make care safer.

Our Regional Quality Strategy is key to this. Individual organisations have actions in place but there will be added value in having common standards applied consistently across our region, as well as a new patient safety centre. As the largest ICB, we can work at scale to tackle common causes and risks of unsafe care.

With more than three million people in our region, we have a huge amount of data with which to identify risks and problem-solve. Drawing on the best international evidence through my role as a World Health Organisation Special Envoy for Patient Safety will put us in a strong position to innovate and make patient care as safe as it can be.

Preventing ill health

A national consultation by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is underway to expand water fluoridation across the North East. Fluoridation is a naturally occurring phenomenon and topping it up to a healthy level brings huge benefits. Indeed, tap water in some areas already contains fluoride, and has been effective at reducing dental decay.

So, we are right behind it. If it goes ahead, we would be making history by introducing what has been called ‘one of the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th and 21st centuries,’ along with tobacco control, vaccination, and safer healthier foods.

This year saw a Tobacco and Vapes Bill introduced to parliament, which sadly did not progress due to lack of parliamentary time. This would have raised the age of sale for all tobacco products by one year, every year from 2027 onwards. If approved, a law of this type could be a significant milestone in our steps towards a smoke-free generation.

Despite reducing the number of smokers, smoking remains our region’s biggest cause of ill health, cancer, disability, and death. No other product kills up to two-thirds of its users, most of whom start as teenagers. Further bold action is needed, and we were one of many organisations who submitted responses in a consultation about the bill.

Bold action is also needed to tackle the harm caused by alcohol. The North East had the highest rate of deaths from alcohol for any English region in 2022. Research shows that alcohol harm costs the North East nearly £1.5 billion a year in ill health, crime and disorder, social care, and the economy.

We have a comprehensive plan to bring a 20 per cent reduction in alcohol-related hospital admissions by 2030, but this must be combined with action on pricing, access and the appeal of alcohol.

Collaborations

With colleagues at North Tees and Hartlepool, and South Tees NHS foundation trusts, we signed a partnership agreement marking an important milestone towards a new hospital group. This will enable the trusts to work together closely and deliver better outcomes for patients.

The year ahead

We will continue to work closely with our combined authorities in the North East and Tees Valley. There is much more we can do to pool our expertise and resources to improve the health and prospects for people in our region.

It has been a challenging time for our staff in the ICB this year, as we completed our programme to reduce running costs by 30 per cent. I would like to thank them for their continued professionalism during this time and as we move forward to deliver our ambitions for longer and healthier lives in our communities.

My hope for this year is that we can improve access to care, and create more time to focus on preventing ill health and reducing health inequalities.

Finally, I would like to thank the many people who have shared their experiences as patients, carers and of working in our region. These personal experiences are the power that drives us forward.

Chief executive's statement

Samantha Allen



After a busy year, I want to thank everyone working in health and care in our region, as well as our many and valued carers and volunteers.

Together we have achieved a great deal, despite sustained pressures on health and care services, and the added challenges of industrial action throughout the year.

Even with the improvements we have made, we must recognise that these pressures inevitably impact on our patients' experiences and the wellbeing of our workforce. Recent surveys show a decline in overall satisfaction in the NHS, and a clear message that people want better access to primary care, more staff and shorter waiting times.

We are not where we want to be, but we are making progress on these areas and more. There is much more still to do.

'The NENC way'

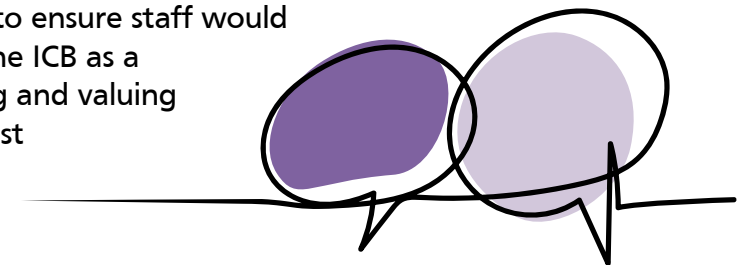
Our first year was one of transition, as we created the ICB and started to set out our ambitions for 'longer and healthier lives for all'.

Our focus this year has been on starting to deliver these ambitions – alongside a tough ask to reduce running costs by 30 per cent. We have now achieved this national requirement, which means around £17.6m less to spend on running our organisation.

We are now turning our focus to delivering our integrated care strategy, Better Health and Wellbeing For All, guided by the values agreed as 'the North East and North Cumbria (or NENC) way'. Our Joint Forward Plan sets out how the NHS, with our partners, will deliver and support these goals.

It's been a challenging time for ICB staff and has highlighted the importance of having a culture where staff feel heard and valued. This was reflected in the national NHS staff survey, with our staff saying they feel safe to voice concerns.

We need to do more to ensure staff would wish to recommend the ICB as a workplace. Supporting and valuing our staff to be 'the best place to work' is a key focus for us.



We each have
**a voice that
counts**

People Promise

"Together we have achieved a great deal, despite sustained pressures on health and care services."

Samantha Allen, chief executive

Our joint forward plan



Longer & healthier lives



Fairer outcomes for all



Better health & care services



Giving children and young people the best start in life

Healthier and fairer lives

Prevention and public health

Healthcare inequalities (CORE20+5)

Social and economic disparities

Better health and care services

Safeguarding

Carers

Best start in life

Maternity & neonatal

Child health & wellbeing

SEND

Longer and healthier lives

We have set demanding goals which include tackling the key causes of early death in our region – smoking, alcohol, obesity, heart disease, substance misuse and suicide.

Our comprehensive plan to tackle alcohol harm included a £2m investment to roll out alcohol care teams in all our region’s NHS trusts, so patients can access specialist support during their hospital stay. We are also working with partners to raise awareness of harm from alcohol, using data to understand how we can make the biggest difference.

In addition, all our hospitals now have tobacco dependency treatment services, so patients have access to specialist trained advisors. We continue to work towards a ‘smoke-free generation’.



Fairer outcomes for all

Working with our partners, we are determined to address broader issues which affect people’s health, such as poverty, housing and employment, as well as rural disparity.

Our Housing, Health and Care programme is working to deliver more integrated housing, care and support so people can be healthy and independent in their own home.

Working with organisations such as Children North East, we have been looking at how to ‘poverty proof’ services so people living in poverty aren’t further disadvantaged when accessing healthcare.

Our ‘deep end’ general practices in some of our more deprived communities have been working to drive up childhood vaccination rates and reduce opioid usage.

Our Waiting Well programme has offered support to more than 9,000 people from vulnerable groups to improve their health and wellbeing while waiting for surgery.



Better health for the 51 percent

We have started to build a movement to raise awareness of women's health issues, and launched new services for women.

In partnership with the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), we hosted our first ever women's health conference, with a follow-up planned for July 2024. We are currently developing a Women's Health Implementation Plan.



We've invested £600,000 in women's health hubs in Sunderland, Gateshead and North Cumbria, providing easier access to care tailored to women's needs, from gynaecology and sexual health to pelvic pain, menopause and more. We were also the first region with all its trusts signed up to the national sexual safety charter.

Dentistry and primary care access

On 1 April 2023, we took on commissioning responsibilities for dentistry, pharmacy and optometry. Since the pandemic, dental services have faced massive challenges in meeting the

increasing and more complex needs of our patients.

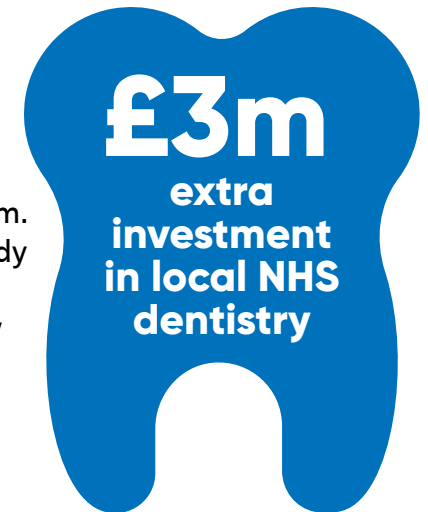
Recognising this, we agreed a plan to protect, retain and stabilise local NHS dentistry, with an extra investment of £3m. Since then, we have seen a slow but steady improvement in the number of people accessing dental treatment, but we know there is more to do.

We are investing more in 2024-25, with £1.3m to provide additional urgent dental services in Darlington and North Cumbria while we work to secure more dental service contracts for Darlington, North Cumbria, Durham, Sunderland and Northumberland.

General practice

Demands on general practice continue to grow, and we have been supporting our colleagues in primary care, as part of the national recovery access plan.

This includes helping practices to tackle the '8am rush' through the NHS app and better telephony, as well as improving referral routes for community services and increasing workforce capacity with additional clinical roles.



Expansion of pharmacy services

Our pharmacies are developing more services that people would have traditionally got from their GP surgery. Our pilot scheme to offer treatment for urinary tract infections (UTIs) at pharmacies was adopted nationally through NHS England's Pharmacy First scheme.

We have also delivered the largest number of Pharmacy First consultations nationally since the new scheme was launched in January 2024.

Collaborations

Our region's Primary Care Collaborative now provides a voice for primary care, ensuring our health and care system benefits fully from their expertise.

We continue to work with our Provider Collaborative, which has worked to address waiting times, increased diagnostic capacity, and attracted major investment in community diagnostic centres planned for North Cumbria, Gateshead and Stockton, plus a new medicines manufacturing hub. The collaborative is also leading delivery of a £17.8m digital diagnostics programme.

In recent months, our region has had the best referral to treatment times in the whole country, with 67.6 per cent of patients receiving treatment within 18 weeks (compared to 58.8 per cent nationally for March 2024).

North East Ambulance Service remains the best performing ambulance service in the country for responses to 'Category One' calls, which are the most serious.

Managing winter and beyond

Working collectively across the region, our winter planning focused on reducing delays for patients, speeding up ambulance handovers and avoiding delays in the transfer of care of patients from hospital. Another key focus was supporting frail patients, and offering enhanced support to those most at risk of falls or emergency admissions.

We invested £1m in navigators for emergency departments and £1.5m to roll out 42 acute respiratory infection hubs. A system co-ordination centre uses real-time data to manage the high number of patients needing help.

A new £9m Urgent Treatment Centre at James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough was another step towards improving urgent and emergency care, with urgent treatment centres co-located with emergency departments.



Improving mental health

We are committed to improving mental health, learning disability and autism support, so more people get the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Too many people are waiting too long for support, and the number needing support is increasing.

We have invested in services for children and young people, recognising that higher levels of poverty in our region are linked to poorer mental health. I was moved by the stories I heard at our children and young people's mental health summit in October 2023, which helped to strengthen the voice of people with lived experience in the design of services.

People can now access crisis mental health support more easily via NHS 111. We are also working with partners to improve inpatient facilities and helping people to live well with support in their own communities.

Quality and learning

Quality is essential to everything we do. We are working with partners to raise standards, so that all services are high quality, safe and effective. I have been delighted by the early feedback about our plans for a region-wide quality strategy to build a positive culture of safety, openness, and learning. Quality must be reflected through all our objectives.

We continue to learn from national inquiries such as the Ockenden Review, Cass Review, and introduction of Martha's Law, as well as issues closer to home, such as recent Care Quality Commission reports on maternity services.

We want our region to be the safest place to be pregnant, give birth and transition into parenthood. The new Maternity and Neonatal Alliance is working towards a more co-ordinated system of care and improved outcomes for all.

Innovations, data, digital and technology

Data and digital technology are vital to unlocking new innovations and better understanding our communities' needs. We are leading on the development of a Secure Data Environment (SDE) which will make it possible to carry out more research and derive new insights to benefit our patients.

Our Digital, Data and Technology Strategy focuses on five key themes, from getting the basics right to building insights and enabling more personalised care closer to home. We are a region of innovators and can be proud of our many experts in the region.

Boost



Being the best at getting better

We've made great progress towards our ambition to be 'the best at getting better'. Our learning and improvement community, Boost, now boasts more than 7,000 members.

This has seen a range of fantastic training and events, as well as a new discharge and safe transfer of care collaborative.

Soon the Boost Learning Academy will widen the range of learning opportunities.

Our learning and improvement community now boasts more than 7,000 members



"As ever, we will need to manage our resources wisely in the coming year. We will need to make the most of opportunities to work at scale across the region, with greater collaboration with partners both in and outside the NHS."

Samantha Allen, chief executive

The year ahead...

As ever, we will need to manage our resources wisely in the coming year. We will need to make the most of opportunities to work at scale across the region, with greater collaboration with partners both in and outside the NHS.

For 2024-25, we have worked with our NHS partners to agree a financial plan with NHS England which will see our system with a deficit plan of £50m. Our priority now is to develop a realistic medium-term financial recovery plan for the next three to four years. Our System Financial Recovery Board will oversee this work to deliver savings, benefits and value for money across the system.

Our region faces what we call a 'quadruple whammy'; we have greater health and care needs, made worse by the pandemic, alongside a complex geography which makes it more expensive to provide services. The system for allocation of growth funding has brought a reduction, despite these complexities. As a result, there are longstanding issues we must address if we are going to deliver our plans for longer and healthier lives.

Over the coming year, we will publish key plans including ambitious quality and safety standards and a new Clinical Conditions Strategic Delivery Plan. This has been developed using population health management approaches, data, and intelligence to identify 12 conditions where we can make the biggest impact.

With health and care changing, work patterns changing and older colleagues retiring, we need to look to the future.

Our People and Culture Plan aims to address these urgent challenges: to support our staff, ensure we have the skilled workforce we need for the future, and equip us for changing needs. This strategy has a clear ambition – to make the North East and North Cumbria the best place to work in health and care.

The public are as committed as ever to the core principles of the NHS. 91 per cent of people support an NHS funded through taxation, and 82 per cent support the service being available to all. So, I start our next year with hope and optimism.

There are always things we can improve, but we should also celebrate the compassionate and high quality care being delivered every day by our dedicated teams. With the support of our communities, health and care staff and our partners, we can rebuild confidence and deliver our ambitions for better health and wellbeing in the North East and North Cumbria.

Samantha Allen, chief executive



12

**conditions
identified to make
the biggest
impact**

Performance and improvement

Performance challenges

The key issues impacting on our performance include capacity and workforce challenges, and the impact of industrial action. We work with our providers to manage these pressures and have ambitious plans to improve health pathways and invest in mental health and wellbeing support.

Planned hospital care and cancer

We have minimised the number of people waiting more than 104 weeks for treatment, and continue to see a reduction in patients waiting more than 65 weeks. The upward trend in waiting list size has also been reversed.

We continue to see a reduction in the number waiting more than 62 days for cancer treatment, as well as improving against the cancer faster diagnosis standard. By March 2024, 75 per cent of patients urgently referred by their GP for suspected cancer were diagnosed or had cancer ruled out in 28 days.



A&E performance IMPROVED in 2023-24 despite increased attendances

Urgent and emergency care

The Accident and Emergency 4-hour response time measures the percentage of patients who are admitted to hospital, transferred to a more appropriate setting, or discharged within four hours. Our 76 per cent performance in March met the national standard and was above the national average, but short of the target we had set ourselves. We continue to work with our trusts to address pressures with patient flow including the reduction in long waiters within emergency departments. Improvements were also seen in ambulance response times, including Category Two emergency calls, such as strokes.

Primary and community care

Our GP practices provided more appointments in March 2024 than March 2023, but patients still face some challenges in getting the appointments they need.

We developed a Primary Care Access Recovery Plan to help increase capacity, offer more appointments and make the most of available resources. This also includes the Pharmacy First scheme.

We have increased capacity in urgent community response services, which have performed better than the national expectation of an urgent response within two hours.

Dentistry

In April 2023, we took on commissioning responsibility for dentistry, as well as pharmacy and optometry. With dental services facing major challenges after the pandemic, we invested an additional £3m to protect, retain and stabilise local NHS dentistry.

Since then we have seen a steady improvement in the number of people accessing dental treatment. We are investing more in 2024-25, including £1.3m for additional urgent dental services in Darlington and North Cumbria. We are working to secure dental service contracts in more areas.



We enabled **30,000** women to get treatment for **UTIs** from pharmacists – the scheme was such a success that it went national.



North East Ambulance Service rated country's best performing for life-threatening Category One calls



Our region was highlighted as country's best for controlling blood pressure



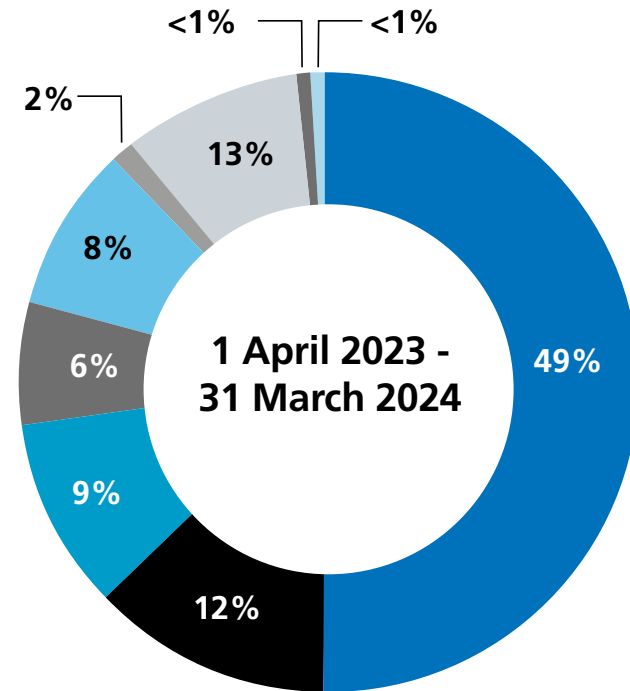
68% receiving treatment within 18 weeks by end of year – best figures in the country

Our finances

Where the money goes:

The ICB continued its strong financial performance in its second year by fulfilling all its financial duties for 2023-24. An underspend has been delivered in administrative spend during the period which has allowed more to be spent on frontline healthcare services.

The overall ICB surplus of almost £4.5m was planned in order to offset deficits in NHS provider trusts within the system. The original planned ICB surplus was £32.4m. The ICB Board approved in March 2024 a reduction to the ICB surplus of £28m, enabling a reduction in the provider deficit position within the Integrated Care System (ICS) to the same value, with no net effect on the overall ICS position. This resulted in a revised planned surplus for the ICB of £4.5m which has been delivered.



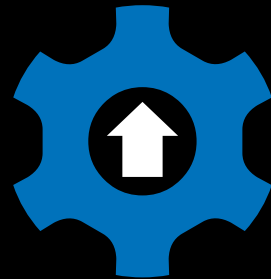
- Acute services: £3.8bn
- Mental health services: £897m
- Community health services: £724m
- Continuing care: £449m
- Prescribing: £624m
- Primary care: £118m
- Primary care delegated: £957m
- Other services: £32m
- Running costs: £61m

£4.5m

ICB overall surplus supporting NHS provider overspend



**£101.8m
of efficiencies
implemented**



Efficiencies

Efficiencies totalling £101.8m (compared to a plan of £94.9m) were delivered by the ICB during the year, which has supported delivery of the overall financial position. This has included particular efficiencies in medicines optimisation and in the delivery of individual packages of care.

ICS financial position

The ICB, along with other system partners, also has a shared responsibility for achievement of financial balance at an ICS level.

For 2023-24, an overall deficit financial plan of £50m for the ICS was agreed with NHS England at the start of the year. The ICS subsequently improved this position to a deficit of £35m during the year. An additional funding allocation received from NHS England

in month 11 has allowed the ICS to report an overall break-even position for the year. The reported outturn position for the ICS was a surplus of £0.43m.

Looking ahead

The financial picture for 2023-24 included significant non-recurring efficiencies and benefits across both the ICB and wider ICS, including substantial additional non-recurring funding from NHS England.

The non-recurring nature of these savings and the underlying financial deficit position means we face a considerable financial challenge to develop balanced financial plans for 2024-25.

The financial plan agreed with NHS England for 2024-25 shows an overall expected ICS deficit of £49.9m.

This includes extremely challenging efficiency plans and work continues to identify potential further options to reduce the system deficit.

Considerable work has been undertaken during 2023-24, across both the ICB and in collaboration with NHS provider trusts across the ICS, to develop a medium-term financial plan for the system and detailed financial plans for 2024-25.

Want to know more?

If you would like to find out more about the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and would like to view our annual report and accounts in full, please go to: northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/publications



www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk

July 2024