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2nd December 2015

Dear Ali,

CCG Assurance Meeting

I would like to thank your team for meeting with the regional team on 10th September at The Old Exchange, Darlington and for your engagement with this initial baseline exercise using the new CCG Assurance Framework

Key points and actions

The assessment review included our discussions during the Quarter 1 Assurance Meeting, the information the CCG documented as part of the self-assessment as well as a range of other information available to NHS England. Our discussion is summarised in the attached meeting notes.

This assessment review has established a baseline for the five individual components of the new assurance framework. An overall headline assessment of the CCG will be made no later than after Quarter 4 in 2016. This is subject to further work being done nationally to confirm the approach to making headline assessments.

Assurance assessment

The following table sets out the initial assurance assessment of the CCG. Any changes to these assessments will be determined through the continuous assurance cycle, including any additional assurance review meetings.

Component 1: Well-led Organisation

Previous rating	N/A	New rating (if different)	Assured as good
Rationale	Examples of system leadership e.g. SeQHiS. Some quality issues but CCG has insight and working with appropriate bodies to resolve. Some challenge in delivery of Transforming Care requirements.		
Actions required to improve rating	To continue and further develop clinical leadership and relationships with partners. To continue to manage and resolve quality issues. To deliver requirements in relation to and Transforming Care. To review capacity to deliver SeQHiS agenda		

Component 2: Planning

Previous rating	N/A	New rating (if different)	Assured as Good
Rationale	Operational plan limited assurance however improvement has been demonstrated from Q4 in both short and long term planning. The CCG has strengthened clinical input to the governing body.		
Actions required to improve rating	Fully assured Operational and System Resilience Group plan, Activity levels performing to plan, Strengthening of transformational plans and relationships with partners in respect of these plans.		

Component 3: Performance

Previous rating	N/A	New rating (if different)	Limited Assurance, requires improvement
Rationale	CCG has failed to deliver on one or more constitutional standard over a period of 2 quarters (Diagnostics, cancer 2 week breast, cancer 62 day, c-diff, A&E). Local tripartite escalation in place for A&E at CDDFT.		
Actions required to improve rating	CCG to demonstrate a strong grip on performance requirements and recovery across the health economy leading to sustained delivery of standards.		

Component 4: Financial Management

Previous rating	N/A	New rating (if different)	Assured as Good
Rationale	CCG is meeting business rules but headroom is deteriorating. Aligned contracts are signed with providers, Significant assurance from internal audit.		
Actions required to improve rating	The CCG is developing a financial recovery plan CCG and needs effective action to address its deteriorating headroom. CCG needs to implement the action identified following the Financial Control Environment Assessment exercise, in particular by ensuring timely activity plans are agreed and contracts signed on time with main providers.		

Component 5: Delegated Functions

Previous rating	N/A	New rating (if different)	Assured as good
Rationale	Level 2 commissioning assessed as good. CCG is meeting its statutory guidance on governance and conflicts of interest and adequately performing its contract management responsibilities. Proportionate patient public involvement and plans for improving services are developing.		
Actions required to improve rating	Clear and credible plans and evidence of maximising opportunities to deliver improvements.		

We will meet again by middle of December to make the next review of the position against the five components. However if issues arise before then that would lead to an earlier review of any of the individual components then we will give at least five working days' notice of a meeting to discuss this, including detail of any key lines of enquiry.

In addition to the next assurance review meeting we will of course stay in touch as necessary through our agreed arrangements across the range of our agendas. I look forward to continue working with you.

If there are any issues that are raised by the content of this letter then please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Director of Delivery
NHS England Cumbria and the North East**