



Northumberland

County Council

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Date: 12 August 2021

Changes to partnerships between the County Council and NHS bodies

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Wendy Pattison, Adult Wellbeing

Purpose of report

This report informs the Board of the dissolution of the partnership agreement between the County Council and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHCT), and of a proposed new partnership between the Council and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) covering the public health services for children, young people and families which were included in the partnership with NHCT.

Recommendations

The Board is invited:

- 1. To comment on the implications for integrated working across health and social care in Northumberland of the ending of the Council's partnership with NHCT**
- 2. To comment on the new partnership arrangement for health visiting and school nursing services proposed by the Council and HDFT**
- 3. To note the contents of two letters about these matters sent by the Chair of NHCT to the Chair of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Wellbeing (Appendices 3 and 4), and the response to these letters from the Council's chief executive (Appendix 5)**

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the "Living" priority in the Corporate Plan.

Key issues

1. Northumbria Healthcare notified the Council in March 2021 that it wished to end the partnership between the Trust and the Council which has existed since 2011, and which followed an earlier partnership between the Council and Northumberland Care Trust which started in 2002.
2. In adult social care, this means that more than 600 staff, some of whom have been employed by the NHS for almost 20 years, will be transferring to Council employment. The report attached as Appendix 1 describes how the Council is preparing for this, including its expectation that there will be some positive opportunities to accelerate closer joint working with primary health care and with mental health services, and the steps which are being taken to maintain current integrated working wherever possible.

3. Since 2018, some public health services for which the Council has statutory responsibility have also been delivered through the partnership with Northumbria. The largest of these is the 0-19 public health service, which includes the health visiting and school nursing services. The report attached as Appendix 2 provides information about the consultation currently in progress on a proposal to establish a new partnership arrangement with HDFT.
4. The Council and Northumbria Healthcare are working closely together to make the changes resulting from the dissolution of their partnership as smooth as possible, and to minimise the risk of disruption to services. However there do continue to be some differences between the two organisations in their understandings of the background to the dissolution of the partnership, and also over the specific issue of what organisation would best provide 0-19 public health services in Northumberland in future. Appendices 3, 4 and 5 are an exchange of letters about these issues.

Changes to partnerships between the County Council and NHS bodies

BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

1.1 As members of the Board will be aware, the primary statutory function of the Board is to “encourage persons who arrange for the provision of any health or social care services in that area to work in an integrated manner”, and the Health and Social Care Act 2012 further stipulates that:

A Health and Wellbeing Board must, in particular, provide such advice, assistance or other support as it thinks appropriate for the purpose of encouraging the making of arrangements under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 in connection with the provision of such services.

1.2 Arrangements under section 75 of the NHS Act are formal partnerships between local authorities and NHS bodies, in which one partner exercises some of the statutory functions of the other. Currently the Council has three section 75 partnerships with NHS organisations:

- a) a partnership with Northumbria Healthcare under which most operational aspects of the Council’s statutory adult social care functions, and some of its main public health functions, are exercised by NHCT;
- b) a partnership with Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group, under which the Council exercises on its behalf most of the operational functions of the CCG connected with NHS continuing healthcare (CHC) and with the commissioning of after-care services for people who have been detained in hospital for treatment, under section 117 of the Mental Health Act (though decisions about eligibility for NHS CHC are still made by the CCG);
- c) a Better Care Fund (BCF) partnership agreement with the CCG, which is nationally mandated as a mechanism for managing funding from the BCF, which is funding with a variety of origins which the Government wishes CCGs and local authorities to manage jointly.

1.3 In March this year, Northumbria Healthcare notified the Council that it wished to dissolve the first of these three partnerships. Since overseeing the development of partnership arrangements is one of the primary roles of the Board, two Council reports about the consequences of this change are attached to this report for discussion by the Board.

2. The reports

2.1 The first report, attached as Appendix 1, describes the overall implications of the ending of the partnership with Northumbria, which, while less broad in its scope than the Council’s former partnership with Northumberland Care Trust, which it succeeded, has continued to be one of the largest section 75 partnerships in England.

2.2 The second report, attached as appendix 2, provides further information about the proposal currently out for consultation to develop a new section 75 partnership with HDFT for 0-19 public health services (health visiting and school nursing). A final decision about this proposed partnership will be taken by the council and HDFT

following the conclusion of the consultation. HDFT is proposed as the Council's future partner for two reasons:

- a) HDFT is a trust which has specialised in the development of 0-19 public health services. It currently provides these in seven other local authority areas, six of them in the north-east, and Council officers have received positive reports about their approach from other areas
- b) Discussions with HDFT have satisfied officers that they share a similar understanding to the Council about the nature of partnership arrangements

2.3 Northumbria Healthcare have told the Council that they would like to continue to provide the 0-19 services themselves. However the view of Council officers is that discussions over the past year about the development of the Council's existing partnership with NHCT, and the Trust's decision to dissolve that partnership, have demonstrated that there is a significant gap between the understandings of the two organisations about the role and governance of partnerships. An exchange of letters about this issue between the chair of Northumbria Healthcare and the chief executive of the Council is attached as Appendices 3-5.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

The implications from a Council perspective are set out in the two reports which are reproduced as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background documents for this report within the meaning of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report.

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Monitoring Officer/Legal	Neil Masson
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