

Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board

13 November 2014

Better Care Fund

Purpose

1. To update the Board on progress with the Better Care Fund Plan following the national assurance process.

Background

2. The Board discussed the Better Care Fund at the specially arranged meeting in September. The Board agreed that it was not possible to submit a credible plan by the deadline set by Government due to the specific financial challenges in the county, the timetable for introducing outcome based commissioning, and recent increases in the rate of emergency admissions.
3. An overview paper was submitted to Department of Health, setting out the local health and social care system's support for the principles of the Better Care Fund, the challenges faced locally and the commitment of all partners to work together to address them. The paper also provided a summary of the work already underway to address the national conditions set in the Fund, and a timetable by which a more detailed plan would be developed.

National Assurance Process

4. The national assurance process of Better Care Fund Plans has now been completed. It has been announced the Oxfordshire is one of five areas where a Better Care Fund Plan has not been approved (along with Essex, Northamptonshire, Lancashire and London Borough of Hillingdon).
5. Oxfordshire has been assigned additional support from NHS England and the Local Government Association to work closely with us. The focus will be to agree an action plan by 14 November 2014 that will ensure a fully developed plan can be submitted by 9 January 2015. This plan will then be subject to another national assurance process to grant approval in time to begin implementation in April.
6. Recent correspondence from NHS England has stressed that if a plan is not agreed locally in the required timescales, or NHS England do not approve it following submission in January, they have the power to withhold or recover funding or to direct the Clinical Commissioning Group to spend it in a particular way. This only applies to funding routed directly through the Clinical Commissioning Group (approx. £33m), so would not include the Disabled Facilities Grant and Social Care Capital Grant funding (approx. £4m) that will be paid directly to Oxfordshire County Council.

Next Steps

1. The decision that Oxfordshire is an area without an approved plan was in line with our expectations given the decision not to submit a full plan in September. Within the submission we requested additional support with understanding best practice from other areas in achieving significant reductions in emergency admissions, and are hopeful this will now be forthcoming.
2. Conversations and joint working have continued between Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford University Hospitals Trust and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. This is proving positive in moving our planning forward, and will be key to achieving a full submission by 9 January 2015.
3. This includes the development of a Single Health and Social Care Plan for Oxfordshire, discussed elsewhere on the agenda and seen as key in setting out how organisations will respond jointly to the challenges facing the local system.
4. Initial meetings have already been held with the additional support from NHS England and the Local Government Association, with further meetings planned.
5. The Most Capable Provider process for the mental health outcomes based contracts is almost complete, and the process for the older people contract is ongoing.

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