

Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board – 17 July 2014

Better Care Fund – Position Paper

1. At its last meeting in March 2014 the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed the Better Care Fund plan for Oxfordshire that was submitted to NHS England on 4th April 2014.
2. Following the national assurance process, the Better Care Fund plan for Oxfordshire has been red rated and did not achieve satisfactory sign off. The Plan has since been updated to respond to feedback, which particularly focused on the engagement of providers, assurance of the deliverability of the schemes in the plan and the likely impact of the proposals on the acute sector. It was intended to update the Board on progress with the Better Care Fund plan at this meeting, along with the Clinical Commissioning Group Strategic Plan (of which it is an integral part).
3. However, within the past week there have been significant developments nationally on the Better Care Fund. Central Government has announced that up to £1 billion of the Better Care Fund (equivalent to around £10m of the original allocation in Oxfordshire) will be allocated to local areas to spend on out-of-hospital services according to the level of reduction in emergency admissions they achieve.
4. Local areas will agree their own ambition on reducing emergency admissions and they will be allocated a portion of the £1 billion performance money in the fund in accordance with the level of performance against this ambition. A guideline reduction in unplanned admissions of at least 3.5% is anticipated, and local areas will need to provide clear evidence of how this will be achieved through spending on adult social care.
5. The remaining money from the performance pot that is not earned through reducing emergency admissions will be used to support NHS-commissioned local services, as agreed by Health and Wellbeing Boards.
6. Revised guidance for local areas to shape the further development of local Better Care Fund plans will be set out shortly. This will include information on the revised performance payment scheme, as well as specific areas where local plans need to be strengthened through providing further detail on local plans.
7. It is still anticipated that the guidance will include the need for Better Care Fund plans to protect adult social care services, and funding for local authorities to implement the Care Act from 2015 onwards. If this is not funded it will have a significant impact on the level of resources available for adult social care and the ability to achieve the required reduction in unplanned admissions.

8. Local areas will be expected to submit revised plans later in the summer, ahead of a further process of national assurance and ministerial sign off. Better Care Fund plans will still be expected to launch from 1 April 2015, as set out in the 2013 Spending Review.
9. It has therefore become unrealistic to present an updated Better Care Fund plan to the Board at this meeting, given the guidance is yet to be published. Significant work will be needed between the County Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS providers to develop robust schemes that meet these revised national conditions, and this work is already underway. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the changes to the Better Care Fund and the implications for plans in Oxfordshire; and**
- (b) The Board is also recommended to agree to hold a special meeting of the Board at an appropriate time to consider an updated Better Care Fund Plan that reflects updated guidance prior to submission to Government.**

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