

Integrated Care Board

Date of meeting	22 May 2025
Title of paper	Quality Assurance Processes in the ICB including Specialised Commissioning
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Agenda item	16
Confidential	No

Executive summary

Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board has responsibilities and legal duties to ensure the services it commissions are safe and effective. There are guidance documents published by the National Quality Board outlining how ICBs should discharge their responsibilities for quality oversight and assurance and escalate and manage emerging risks in services.

During 2025 a proportion of Specialised Commissioning will be delegated to ICBs from NHSE and consequently ICBs will also have a responsibility to oversee quality in these services this will be supported by the existing specialised commissioning quality team.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and assure Board of the arrangements, systems and processes in place within the ICB to ensure there is oversight and assurance of the quality of commissioned services in line with national guidance.

Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

1. Note the arrangements for the surveillance of quality in commissioned services and be assured that these are robust and in line with national guidance.
2. Note the arrangements for surveillance of quality in specialised commissioning

Which Strategic Objective/s does the report relate to:		Tick
SO1	Improve quality, including safety, clinical outcomes, and patient experience	✓
SO2	To equalise opportunities and clinical outcomes across the area	✓
SO3	Make working in Lancashire and South Cumbria an attractive and desirable option for existing and potential employees	
SO4	Meet financial targets and deliver improved productivity	
SO5	Meet national and locally determined performance standards and targets	✓
SO6	To develop and implement ambitious, deliverable strategies	

Implications				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Associated risks	✓			Improving Quality including safety, clinical outcomes and patient experience is a board strategic objective and there are risks associated with this
Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?	✓			Yes
Financial Implications			✓	
Where paper has been discussed (list other committees/forums that have discussed this paper)				
Meeting	Date		Outcomes	
ICB Executive Meeting	13 May 2025		Paper finalised for Board	
Conflicts of interest associated with this report				
N/A				
Impact assessments				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Quality impact assessment completed			✓	
Equality impact assessment completed			✓	
Data privacy impact assessment completed			✓	
Report authorised by: Professor Sarah O'Brien, Chief Nursing Officer				

Integrated Care Board – 22 May 2025

Quality Assurance Processes in the ICB including Specialised Commissioning

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Integrated Care Board (ICB) as the commissioner for healthcare services across Lancashire and South Cumbria has a crucial role in ensuring the quality and safety of commissioned services.
- 1.2 Commissioners monitor the performance of healthcare services, support quality improvement, identify risks and mitigations and work closely with key partners. There is guidance from the National Quality Board (NQB) to support ICBs in discharging their duties in relation to the quality and safety of services.
- 1.3 NHSE is responsible for assuring the quality of the services it directly commissions (Specialised Commissioning), but as some of these services are delegated to ICBs it is important that ICBs also have oversight and assurance of the quality of these services.
- 1.4 At previous Board meetings, members have asked for assurance as to how the ICB ensures it meets its responsibilities regarding the oversight and assurance of quality across commissioned services. The purpose of this paper is to outline the arrangements within the ICB for quality assurance, including the arrangements for specialised commissioning.

2. ICB Quality Assurance Framework

- 2.1 The National Quality Board (NQB) has published guidance documents for ICBs including a position statement on quality in Integrated Care Systems (ICS), guidance for System Quality Groups (SQGs) and principles for assessing and managing risks in an ICS. Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB has reviewed this guidance and ensured that its approach to the oversight of safety and quality is in line with the recommendations from the NQB.
- 2.2 There are a few routes (formal and informal) through which the ICB undertakes routine surveillance and assurance of the safety and effectiveness of commissioned services. These are illustrated in Appendix 1 and some of the key features are described below:
 - 2.2.1 There is an experienced quality and safety team within the CNO portfolio who work closely with the 5 large NHS providers, support primary care as required and oversee the plethora of smaller providers in LSC. There is also a dedicated care sector team and quality assurance function within the All Age Continuing Care service. These teams are proactive in the

surveillance of quality and reactive when there is a risk emerging within a provider. The team attend the Quality Committee of each large NHS provider, undertake targeted visits as required and undertake formal quarterly reviews pertaining to quality and safety indicators. There are regular meetings with NHSE and CQC to discuss emerging concerns. These relationships between the ICB, providers and regulators foster an open and transparent culture to support quality, safety and learning in commissioned services.

2.2.2 These informal surveillance activities are supported by formal meetings with providers as shown in Appendix 1 eg Integrated Commissioning and Contacting meeting where quality and safety is discussed and for large NHS contracts there is a quality schedule with specific KPIs monitored by the quality team. If necessary, quality and safety concerns can be escalated to the IAG (Improvement and Assurance Group) currently chaired by the system turnaround director. Enhanced quality concerns would also be monitored at IAG, this would be for any provider with regulatory undertakings relating to quality.

2.2.3 The ICB Quality and Outcomes Committee receives regular reports regarding commissioned services and has a role to assure, advice and alert Board regarding the quality and safety of commissioned services.

2.2.4 In line with national guidance, the ICB holds a System Quality Group chaired by the CNO which further supports quality surveillance and quality improvement across the system. The CNO team also provide a monthly update to Regional Quality Group.

2.2.5 The team have benchmarked the ICB against national guidance and developed a quality governance framework to further assure Quality and Outcomes Committee that there are robust processes in place.

3. Specialised Commissioning

3.1 NHSE directly commission some NHS services, typically these services are specialised and often serve a larger population than an ICB footprint.

3.2 A number of services have been delegated to the ICB from April 2025. There is ongoing work to ensure that the ICB has oversight of those services within LSC working jointly with NHSE. In addition there is work to ensure that the three North West ICBs work with NHSE to ensure a collective oversight.

3.3 There is a proposed move of NHSE staff from some areas of the spec comm team to move into LSC ICB as the host on behalf of the three ICB's – this transfer has been paused until April 2026.

3.4 Under these arrangements, the specialised commissioning quality team will continue to oversee quality and manage emerging risks in these services but will report into the three north west ICBs and work more closely with ICB quality

teams. Appendix 2 outlines the quality surveillance and escalation processes for specialised commissioning.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 As commissioners of healthcare, the ICB has an important role in assuring the quality of commissioned services and supporting these services to manage risks as they emerge. LSC ICB has robust systems in place for the routine surveillance of quality and safety and follows national guidance to manage and support emerging risks.

5. Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

- Note the arrangements for the surveillance of quality in commissioned services and be assured that these are robust and in line with national guidance.
- Note the arrangements for surveillance of quality in specialised commissioning.

Sarah O'Brien, Chief Nursing Officer

7 May 2025