

Integrated Care Board

Date of meeting	17 September 2026
Title of paper	Overview of ICB Winter Planning 2026/27
Presented by	Craig Harris, Chief Commissioning Officer
Author	Wendy Lewis, Director of System Coordination and Flow
Agenda item	13
Confidential	No

Executive summary

The purpose of this paper is to outline the ICB Winter Planning process for 2026/27 and to provide assurance on progress to the Board.

Development of the ICB's Winter Plan submission for 2026/27 is being led by Urgent and Emergency Care Delivery Boards. A Board Assurance Statement (BAS) template is required to be submitted to NHSE by ICBs and Trusts regarding these plans.

The ICB UEC commissioning team is coordinating the ICB BAS template across relevant teams within the ICB. Trusts and the ICB were required to submit initial drafts to the NHS England North West regional team on 26 August. Feedback has been provided and this will be addressed prior to final submission of the Winter plans, BAS templates, and alignment with system plans and the regional winter stress-testing exercise on 18 September.

Board approval for the BAS template submission will be sought at the meeting on 8 October.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

In the development of the plan, the ICB UEC team is engaging with key external stakeholders across the system and within NHS England North West:

- Acute Providers
- UEC Delivery Board Chairs
- LSCFT Leadership Team
- NWAS
- Local Authority unplanned care leads

Internal engagement with:

- Primary and Community Commissioning Teams
- Nursing Directorate
- MH commissioning team
- Emergency Preparedness Readiness and Response (EPRR) Team
- System Coordination Centre (SCC)

Recommendations				
The Board is requested to: 1. Note the contents of the report. 2. Note the proposed plans for finalising the winter plan submission and BASs 3. Receive a further report at its meeting in October to reflect the finalised winter plans and BAS for approval				
Which Strategic Objective/s does the report relate to:				Tick
SO1	To improve population health and reduce inequalities through effective strategic commissioning.			✓
SO2	Commission high quality, safe and accessible services that deliver better and more equitable outcomes and patient experience.			✓
SO3	To develop and sustain the workforce, leadership and organisational capability required to operate as an effective strategic commissioner.			✓
SO4	Improved financial sustainability through directing available resources to deliver the greatest possible value.			✓
SO5	To deliver agreed national and local outcomes through a balanced focus on performance, improvement and long-term system resilience.			✓
Implications				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Associated risks	✓			<i>Risks to quality and finances are anticipated given the level of pressure experienced in the system prior to winter capacity challenges starting to impact.</i>
Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?		✓		
Financial Implications		✓		
Where paper has been discussed (list other committees/forums that have discussed this paper)				
Meeting	Date		Outcomes	
ICB Commissioning Committee	19 August 2026			
Conflicts of interest associated with this report				
Not applicable				
Impact assessments				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Quality impact assessment completed		✓		An IIA will be completed along with the Board Assurance Statements which will be submitted for approval at the 8 October Board meeting
Equality impact assessment completed		✓		An IIA will be completed along with the Board Assurance Statements which will be submitted

				for approval at the 8 October Board meeting
Data privacy impact assessment completed		✓		

Report authorised by:	Craig Harris, Deputy Chief Executive (interim), Chief Commissioning Officer & Accountable Emergency Officer
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Integrated Care Board – 17 September 2026

Overview of ICB Winter Planning 2026/27

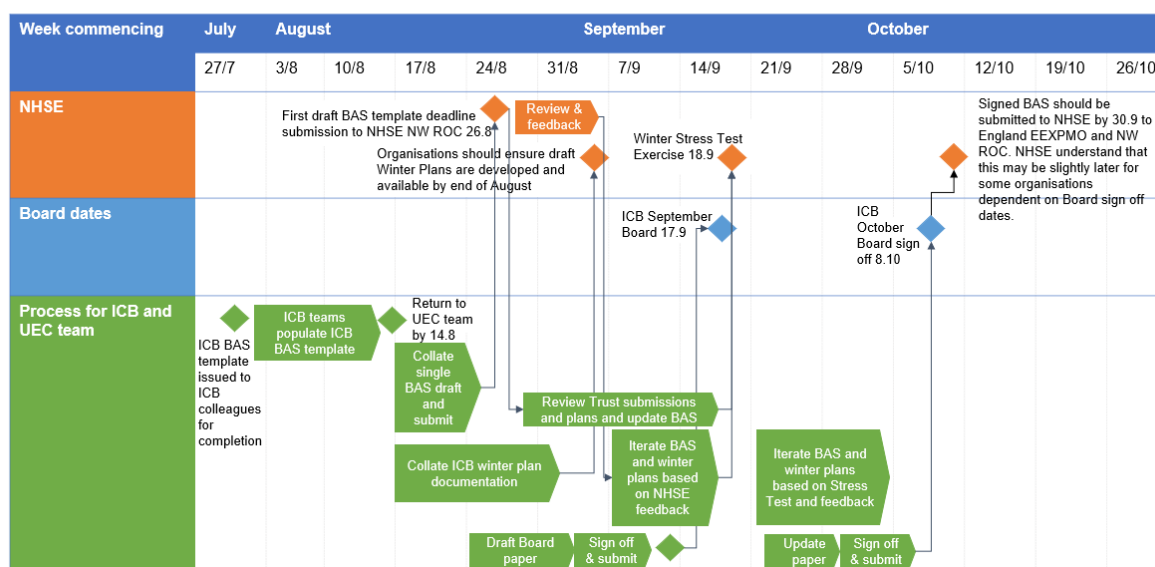
1. Introduction

- 1.1 NHS England have set out the national approach to winter 2026/27 and the actions that every part of the NHS and local government need to take.
- 1.2 Every local area must have a robust, clinically led and deliverable winter plan. The core expectations are:
 - draft winter plans completed by the end of August, developed jointly by all local partners: acute, ambulance, community, mental health, primary care, local authorities, social care and the third sector
 - a named executive winter lead in every ICB and provider, accountable for preparedness and response
 - plans tested at the NHS England regional stress test exercises in September
 - plans signed off by boards using the board assurance statements (BAS),
- 1.3 ICBs are responsible for the winter plan for their area, agreed with all partners and signed off by their board. Plans must be built on a whole-area demand and capacity analysis, and to commissioning the right level of activity for winter so that people are treated closer to home where possible.
- 1.4 This paper seeks to provide assurance on progress of the core expectations to the Board, in preparation for board approval of the final submission and board assurance statements
- 1.5 This year, Board Assurance has been increased from previous years as a result of learning from Winter 2025/26.

2. Winter Planning Process

- 2.1 The illustration below outlines the milestones to develop this year's plan and is also attached as Appendix A.

Winter planning - Milestones



- 2.2 ICB winter planning and development of the national Board Assurance Statement template (BAS) for approval is being coordinated by the UEC commissioning team and is incorporating content reflecting all relevant ICB teams, including Primary and Community Care, Quality, Immunizations and Vaccinations, System Coordination and EPRR.

3 Progress Against Key Expectations

3.1 Draft Submission:

- 3.1.1 A first draft BAS was submitted as requested by the NHSE North West regional team on 26 August for initial regional review and feedback. Our draft submission had been developed in collaboration with internal stakeholders and utilising UEC governance of the UEC Delivery Boards.
- 3.1.2 It was clearly explained that the BAS template was in draft form, and had not yet been considered by the Board, therefore being subject to formal review, approval and sign-off through the appropriate governance process. The draft submission is attached at Appendix B.
- 3.1.3 Trust BAS draft submissions were also made to the NHSE North West regional team on the same day, and these have subsequently been shared with the ICB SCC and UEC teams. We note that there is significant variation in the level of detail and assurance provided by the Trust submissions at this stage. The development of winter plans (which inform Trust BAS submissions) is being led by Urgent and Emergency Care Delivery Boards, based on their Urgent and Emergency Care Improvement Plans.

- 3.1.4 Feedback was received from the regional team on 9th September 2026 and all points are now being progressed before final BAS and final submission.
- 3.1.5 Region also shared the feedback for each LSC provider and all actions will be progressed to ensure alignment with each BAS and winter plan to ensure optimal operational preparation.
- 3.2 Named Executive Winter Lead: Craig Harris
- 3.3 Preparation for Regional Stress Test Exercise 18 September:
 - 3.3.1 A North West Winter Planning Exercise is scheduled for 18 September to stress test all submitted plans and will be coordinated and led by NHS England as per a national design.
 - 3.3.2 The findings of this event will also inform further iteration of winter plans and the BAS template ahead of finalisation.
 - 3.3.3 SCC are coordinating attendance at this event, which will include senior leads from system partners and ICB Place leads
- 3.4 Board Approval:
 - 3.4.1 The draft BAS will be refined from initial submission based on feedback, as well as to reflect providers' plans and ensure alignment. NHS England are aware of this required additional step in their process.
 - 3.4.2 The Board will sign off the ICB BAS at the meeting on 8 October.

4. Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Note the proposed plans for finalising the winter plan submission and BASs
- Receive a further report at its meeting in October to reflect the finalised winter plans and BAS for approval

Wendy Lewis

4 September 2026

Appendices

Appendix A Winter planning milestones	Attached
Appendix B ICB Board Assurance Statement draft submission	Link - <u>Item 13 - Appendix B-ICB Board assurance statement draft submission.xlsx</u>