

To: • Peter Tinson

cc. •

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

18 September 2026

Dear Peter

Assurance of Delegated Primary Care Commissioning

I am writing to confirm the outcome of NHS England North West's assessment of assurance for delegated primary care commissioning for 2025/2026.

The National Oversight Framework 25/26 and Primary Care Commissioning Assurance Framework sets out NHS England's expectations on how ICBs will provide assurance that they are exercising the delegated functions safely, effectively, and consistently within legislation, regulations and statutory guidance.

The National Oversight Framework

NHS England remains accountable for those services it has delegated responsibility for the commissioning of to ICBs. These include certain specialised services and all primary care services (primary medical care, dentistry, pharmacy and ophthalmic services) and the handling of associated complaints. NHS England will hold ICBs to account for the performance of these services in their system through delegation agreements.

Oversight of delegated functions form part of NHS England's wider oversight of ICBs. In particular, NHS England will use the ICB annual assessment to judge whether delegated commissioning activities and associated complaints handling are being carried out appropriately. This may involve the in-year monitoring of additional data in relation to delegated services.

Primary Care Commissioning Framework

The Primary Care Commissioning Framework describes the need for a collaborative ongoing approach to assure that functions are being delivered, and this aim has been serviced across the North West region via the North West Primary Care Programme Board, North West Primary Care Leads meeting, information sharing, submission of NHS England returns and ICB notifications through the regional notification protocol.

The framework also describes the need for ICBs to complete an annual self-declaration to provide assurance that ICBs have the necessary processes and mechanisms in place to meet core commissioning and contracting standards, as set out in the delegation agreement.

Regional teams are required to review self-declaration submissions, identifying trends, informing discussions with ICBs and to highlight areas of potential regional risk. Outputs of the self-declaration process will be used to support wider discussions on NHS England's overall assurance of delegated commissioning functions.

A review of ICB PCAF Annual Self declaration and supporting information was presented to the North West Primary Care Senior Leadership Team and an overall assessment of ICB compliance with the delegation agreement and relevant legislation determined.

Three levels of assurance and outcomes were considered as follows:

1. The ICB is fully compliant with the delegation agreement and relevant legislation
Action: continue routine assurance activities
2. The ICB is compliant with the delegation agreement and relevant legislation, but some risks have been identified.
Action: Request action plan from ICB to mitigate and resolve risks with oversight through Primary Care Leads group until resolved. Continue routine assurance activities.
3. The ICB is not compliant with the delegation agreement and relevant legislation.
Action: Report decision to NW Commissioning Group and relevant ICB. Formal extraordinary Primary Care Leads group with executive attendance convened to discuss and agree jointly next steps and action plan.

Outcome of the review

Having reviewed the Self-Assessment provided by the ICB, alongside any supporting intelligence and evidence, the North West Primary Care Senior Leadership Team determined that:

The ICB is fully compliant with the delegation agreement and relevant legislation

Next Steps

Thank you for your ongoing engagement with the assurance of Primary Care delegated services, we look forward to working with you to assure these services for 26/27 and will update you through our established channels of any changes to this process.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Gough
Assistant Director of Primary Care Assurance and Improvement
NHS England - North West Region

