

North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust Board Briefing – February 2025 Board

This briefing aims to keep you informed of the discussions at our Trust Board. To watch the recording and read the papers, please visit the [Board Meeting page](#) on the Combined Healthcare website. Please note this briefing does not replace the official Board minutes, which will be published in due course and be available on the website.



Patient Story

This month's Patient Story featured Paul - a peer support worker at Combined, who outlined his experiences of receiving care from Harplands Hospital and his interactions with the Crisis Care Centre. You can watch the recording of the story and Board discussion [at this link](#).

REACH Recognition Individual Award

This month's REACH Recognition Individual Award was presented to Kerry Richardson, Undergraduate Coordinator/ SARD lead in the Medical Education Team. You can watch the recording of the REACH Award [at this link](#).

Chief Executive's Report

Dr Buki Adeyemo, Chief Executive, presented the report, which is available [at this link](#). Buki also drew the Board's attention to a highly complimentary quality assurance visit from Keele University, as well as a highly successful stakeholder engagement event at Port Vale FC. There was discussion about progress on our sustainability agenda, as well as operational pressures in the local system. You can watch the recording of the CEO Report [at this link](#).

ICB Briefing 16 January 2025

Dr Buki Adeyemo, Chief Executive, presented the report to the Board. The report is available [at this link](#).

Chair's Report

Janet Dawson gave a Chair's Report to the Board, which is available [at this link](#). Janet in particular wanted to stress the strong Board level commitment to diversity and inclusion. She also welcomed the new approach from NHS England to engage with leadership via webinar on key issues like the new operating model. You can watch the recording of the Chair's Report [at this link](#).

Questions from Members of the Public

There was a question from a member of the public about wait times for Autism Spectrum Disorder treatment. You can watch the response from our Chief Operating Officer and extended Board discussion on this topic [at this link](#). N.B. Anyone can submit a question for consideration and discussion at the Board via the [Ask The Board facility](#) on the Trust website.

Quality Committee Assurance Report

Prof Pauline Walsh presented the report from the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 6 February 2025. The Chief Nursing Officer provided an update on system pressures - there have been 5 critical incidents declared this winter. There has been significant demand on the Urgent and Emergency (UEC) pathway. The Trust has supported our system partners to undertake necessary actions. The Committee received a presentation on Quality Improvement from the Quality Improvement Lead Practitioner. Discussion took place regarding the NHS Impact self-assessment of quality improvement and identified areas for future work. The committee had had a useful review of safer staffing and noted good progress in relation to key areas of priority. A CQC inspection of Holmecroft surgery is underway.

Improving Quality and Performance Report (IQPR) Month 9

Eric Gardiner presented the report. There are 5 special cause variations (orange variation flags) – signifying concern:

- CAMHS 4 week wait (Referral to Assessment)
- CAMHS 18 week wait (Referral to Treatment)
- CYP Eating Disorders Referral to Assessment (Urgent) 1 week
- Statutory and Mandatory Training
- Sickness Absence

There are 4 special cause variations (blue variation flags) – signifying improvement:

- Care Plan Compliance
- Vacancy Rate
- Staff Turnover
- Year to date agency spend as a % of total pay bill

People, Culture and Development Committee Assurance Report

Martin Evans presented the report from the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 3 February 2025. Sickness absence remains above target at 6%. Anxiety, stress, depression remains the highest sickness reason within the Trust.

The committee agreed the need to review and consider Risk 2055 “risk to the delivery of people services and legislative requirements due to service demand exceeding team capacity” and mitigations in detail alongside a review of progress against, and future work required in delivery of the People Plan. This will feature as a key focus within a PCDC deep dive meeting.

Positive performance was acknowledged as follows: -

- Vacancy Rate: Vacancy rate at 8.4%, within target for the fourth consecutive month.
- Appraisal: continue to be above the 85% target.
- Staff Turnover: reduced from 10.6% to 10.2%
- Agency spend: achieved the standard at 2.8% for the third consecutive month which is under the agency cap.
- Time to hire: remains within the KPI of 60 days currently at 51.6, an improvement of 2.8 days from Q2.

Finance position month 9

Eric Gardiner presented the report. The Adjusted Financial Performance in month is a £257k surplus against a surplus plan of £53k, giving a favourable variance of £204k. The position year to date is £357k surplus against a planned deficit of £333k giving a favourable variance of £690k. The Trust is forecasting to deliver a £2.4m surplus and is in discussion with NHS England about possible opportunities for extra capital monies to be available for the next financial year.

Finance and Resource Committee Assurance Report

Russell Andrews presented the report from the meetings of the Committee held on 6 February 2025. The Committee were advised that the planning guidance was issued on 30 January, with a headline submission on 27 February 2025 followed by a full final plan submission on 27 March 2025. Work is progressing on the application of the planning guidance assumptions. There was a discussion about how our planning will link with system wide activity and the initial system deficit forecast for 2025-26.

A score reduction for BAF risk 2 was approved (likelihood of not achieving financial position reduced from unlikely to rare). BAF risk 7 (estate planning) is at risk of delivery due to delays in completion of the Estates strategy. Assurance was given that this is progressing. There was a discussion about the score for BAF Risk 8 (Partnerships) and it was agreed that it is currently at the correct level.

Board Assurance Framework Quarter 3 Report (BAF)

Nicky Griffiths presented the report. The report updates the Board on progress against the risks defined within the Board Assurance Framework (BAF) for the period Quarter 3. All updates have been approved by the Executive Lead for the risk. The report has been through the Trust's Senior Leadership Team Meeting and Sub-Committees of the Board and comes to the Board meeting for approval, which was given.

Statement of Purpose (SOP)

Nicky Griffiths presented the report. The SOP has been updated and transferred to the new template supplied by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The SOP describes the locations of all current services describing specification and regulated activities for each. The Board approved the SOP. The Governance Team will continue to update on a 6 monthly basis, providing any updates to the CQC and updating the SOP on the Trust's external website.

Register of Board Members Declarations

Nicky Griffiths presented the report. The Register was approved.

Audit Committee Assurance Report

Jennie Koo presented the report from the Committee meeting on 7 February 2025. Under the Agreement of Annual Accounts Process and Timetable, delegated authority from Trust Board has been requested on or before 8 May 2025 to approve the final accounts at the extraordinary Audit Committee on 6 June 2025.

Consent items

The Safer Staffing Monthly Report for December 2024 and the Register of Sealed Documents were presented as consent items and can be read in the [Board papers bundle](#)

Any Other Business

The Board meeting closed at noon. Date and time of next meeting in public is 10.00 am, 13 March 2025. To access papers and meeting link, please visit <https://www.combined.nhs.uk/about-us/our-board/board-meetings/>