

SHCA BRIEFING - SPECIALISED COMMISSIONING TASKFORCE – MAY 2014

Following his appointment as Chief Executive of NHS England, Simon Stevens has swiftly made specialised commissioning his top priority. In particular, specialised commissioning faces a budget overspend of around £400million for 2013/14 and a system of matrix management beset with delay and weak leadership.

In response to these challenges, Mr Stevens has established a root and branch review of NHS England's specialised commissioning function. This 'taskforce' began work on 1st May, with an instruction to report back in three months.

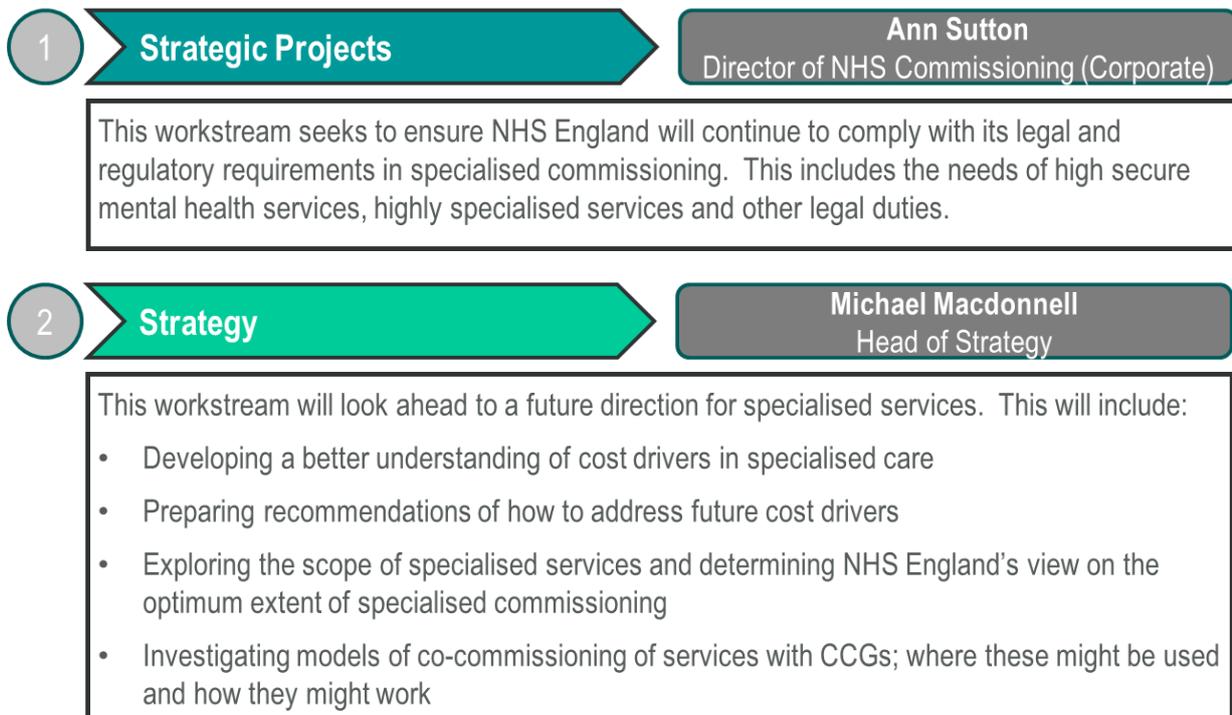
The taskforce is under the leadership of Paul Watson, Regional Director of the Midlands and East, who has been relieved of some of his regional duties in order to take up the role.

Perhaps most significantly, the taskforce is being bolstered with significant extra capacity from outside specialised commissioning. 50 additional NHS England employees are being redeployed to the taskforce – a notable commitment given the slender management capacity across specialised commissioning at present.

Workstreams

The taskforce is comprised of seven workstreams, each with a nominated lead, reporting in to Paul Watson. Their public communication is expected to be tightly controlled.

Further detail on each of the workstreams is given below.



3

Clinically driven change

James Palmer
Clinical Director Specialised Services

This workstream will seek to ensure that NHS England's development of services continues to be clinically led. It will include:

- Ensuring that the Programmes of Care are robust and fit for purpose
- Determining future options for the Cancer Drugs Fund

4

Operational leadership

Cathy Edwards
Head of Specialised (South Yorkshire)

This workstream will examine how NHS England organises its specialised commissioning function and ensures delivery. It will include:

- Ensuring routine business runs efficiently, including the facilitation of governance boards, responses to parliamentary enquiries and public communications
- QIPP
- Proposals for a future permanent structure of specialised commissioning, across Area Teams, Regions and the National Support Centre

5

Contracts and technical delivery

Peter Huskinson
Director of Commissioning (Leicestershire)

This workstream will examine the technicalities of NHS England's contracting of specialised services. It will include:

- Ensuring the correct contracts are in place, with robust information standards
- Assessing procurement and how strong performance can be ensured
- Working on a pricing strategy

6

Strong financial control

Rachel Hardy
Director of Finance (Midlands and East)

This workstream will assess how financial input is given to specialised commissioning. It will include:

- Ensuring that financial input is available where required in the development of specialised services, including at Programmes of Care
- Assessing the allocation of resources between Area Teams and Clinical Commissioning Groups

7

Analytics

Ming Tang
Director, Data and Information Management

This workstream will assess the information systems in specialised commissioning. It will include:

- Assessment of current data sources and their strengths
- Development of national systems for information management

Assessment

This taskforce represents a comprehensive review of NHS England's specialised commissioning. Its implications could be far-reaching. The Alliance's recent RAG-rating of NHS England's performance against its Operating Model for specialised services suggested that such a review was needed.

While the review represents a strong opportunity to improve specialised commissioning, there might be concerns about delays to service developments in the meantime. A considerable number of people are engaged in the system, not least through the Clinical Reference Groups, and they will need to be given clear guidance for their work over the coming months.

Perhaps most encouragingly, the addition of extra capacity to this review may be a belated recognition of the wafer-thin management resource in specialised commissioning. If this can be set on a better footing in future, as part of a system with clearer operational leadership, significant improvements can be achieved.

While there is no external engagement currently planned as part of this internal review, patients, patient groups and others will need to be assured that their views will be taken into account in the event of wholesale changes being recommended. In particular, improvements to services should not be delayed or jeopardised as a result of this review and the current financial difficulties.

The Alliance will be developing a formal submission to the taskforce in due course.