

Better Care Fund (paper 3)

Introduction

Central government intends to change the way that some NHS budgets are allocated with the intention of driving integration of health and social care systems at a local level. This is called the Better Care Fund (BCF). The BCF is:

- A single pooled budget for health and social care
- Based on a plan agreed between the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authorities
- Part of the NHS two year (operational) and five year (strategic) plans

CCGs and local authorities are expected to submit plans by 4 April 2014 explaining how they will use this shared fund to improve local services to NHS England.

The Better Care Fund in Newcastle

A first draft of the plan was constructed in the first weeks of January 2014 by the Newcastle BCF Programme Board. The Programme Board includes representatives from the local authority, the CCGs, Newcastle Hospitals and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trusts, GPs, NHS England's Local Area Team, Newcastle CVS (representing Newcastle's voluntary and community sector) and Healthwatch Newcastle.

The Programme Board is using national guidance on what transformation should look like for service users (National Voices) and the VCS (including Healthwatch Newcastle) is considering information it has collected (reports, data and other information) to check whether the guidance is representative of local views and to consider gaps. An event to engage the wider VCS was held on 12 March 2014 at the Centre for Life.

Healthwatch Newcastle

The Programme Board identified engagement with the VCS as a priority and Healthwatch Newcastle (HWN) has been involved in this process by considering the information it has collected, writing the description of the BCF and supporting the development of this engagement. HWN identified two Board members at the January Board meeting who would work on the BCF on behalf of Healthwatch Newcastle. Both of these members have been kept updated on developments and attended the event on 12 March 2014, as did Vice Chair Jill Remnant.

It became clear during this event that Healthwatch Newcastle's role is separate from the VCS. Healthwatch Newcastle needs to ensure that the BCF process engages with the general public of Newcastle who may or may not be users of health and/or social care services or VCS services. As far as possible Healthwatch Newcastle needs to ultimately ensure that the public understands what the BCF will mean to them.

Healthwatch Newcastle actions

Healthwatch Newcastle will confirm its place on the BCF Programme Board and this role will be to advise, guide and support the Programme Board to engage appropriately with the public of Newcastle. There is also a need to be part of the levels beneath the Programme Board to again influence the engagement processes. The two Board members will be integral to this, as will the Programme Manager and Chair of Healthwatch Newcastle.

Healthwatch Board meeting - 24/03/14

To support this, the staff team will begin to consider how the general public can be engaged in this process and offer advice to both the Healthwatch Newcastle's representatives and also the Programme Board.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board notes the contents of this report and agrees the actions set out in the report.