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Raj Jain, Chair  
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board

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27 July 2023

By email

Dear Raj

**Re; Annual assessment of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board's performance in 2022-23**

**I am writing to you pursuant to Section 14Z59 of the NHS Act 2006 (Hereafter referred to as "*The Act*"), as amended by the Health and Care Act 2022. Under the Act NHS England is required to conduct a performance assessment of each Integrated Care Board (ICB) with respect to each financial year. In making my assessment I have considered evidence from your annual report and accounts; available data; feedback from stakeholders and the discussions that my team and I have had with you and your colleagues throughout the year.**

This letter sets out my assessment of your organisation's performance against those specific objectives set for it by NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, its statutory duties as defined in the Act and its wider role within your Integrated Care System across the 2022/23 financial year.

I have structured my assessment to consider your role in providing leadership and good governance within your Integrated Care System as well as how you have contributed to each of the four fundamental purposes of an ICS. For each section of my assessment, I have summarised those areas in which I believe your ICB is displaying good or outstanding practice and could act as a peer or an exemplar to others. I have also included any areas in which I feel further progress is required and any support or assistance being supplied by NHS England to facilitate improvement.

In making my assessment I have sought to take into account the relative infancy of ICBs, having only been statutory bodies for nine months of the 2022/23 financial year. I am also mindful of the developing local strategic aims of ICS' set out in the Integrated Care Strategy for your system and articulated through your recently published Joint Forward Plan.

I thank you and your team for all of your work over the 2022/23 financial year in what remain challenging times for the health and care sector and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Barker', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

**Richard Barker CBE**  
**Regional Director (North West)**

cc; Graham Urwin, Chief Executive Office

## **Section 1: System leadership**

In the year when becoming established on a statutory footing the ICB has put in place governance structures to support Board oversight of quality and safety and the ongoing focus of improvement in this area. These arrangements are outlined in detail in the Annual Report, and have been described to us in our regular assurance meetings. These committee's include partner members from the wider Health and Social Care system. We note that the Board also includes professional leadership from Medical and Nursing perspective, ensuring the Board is able to take appropriate advice.

## **Section 2: Improving population health and healthcare**

The annual report has an extensive performance section, where improvements can be seen through the year in terms of access and quality. An example of this improvement work can be seen within diagnostics, where a dedicated Diagnostics Program has seen the ICB move from 20<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> in a ranking of the 42 ICB's. A further example would be the work on elective recovery that had seen the near elimination of 104 week waits by the end of the period covered and I note that these have since been eliminated. We noted that the ICB continues to be challenged on urgent care and has been put in the Tier 1 support program. We look forward to seeing further improvement in that area over the coming year. I also note the ongoing support from the ICB for the System Improvement Board of Liverpool University Hospitals as we work together to support the trust in its improvement journey. Additionally, the inappropriate use of out of area Mental Health beds is an area the ICB should focus on over the coming year.

Statutory guidance for working with people and communities was published in July 2022. This guidance is for Integrated Care Boards, NHS trusts and NHS England, and we note that this guidance has been used in your public involvement and consultation, leading to the Cheshire and Merseyside Public Engagement Framework. In particular it was good to read about the progress made with regards to the Citizens' Panel, which now has over 700 members, and we look forward to hearing about how this is impacting your decision making over the coming year.

## **Section 3: Tackling unequal outcomes, access and experience**

The annual report details a wide range of work which is targeting unequal outcomes, access and experience. The All Together Fairer report for Cheshire and Merseyside was published in May 2022, and your report details how this has become a guiding document in tackling Health Inequalities within the system. You give examples of where you have been able to use the finding of the report in a targeted way to support local access improvements, for example the cancer screening programmes and the 0-5 immunisations within the Halton Primary Care Network. This research based approach is evident across a wide range of the programs outlined in the annual report.

A further example of the work on wider system working and health inequalities was the fuel poverty dashboard, which was developed ahead of the winter and allowed the wider health and social care system to target help for the most vulnerable, from both a health and social aspect.

#### **Section 4: Enhancing productivity and value for money**

The annual report details the financial performance of the ICB over the 9 months since the ICB was formed. A surplus of £12.7m was delivered, thus meeting the key financial duties. The year ahead is already proving to be challenging from a financial aspect with significant variation across organisations within the system. Actions are in place to bring system finances onto a more sustainable footing but this will require all organisations to collaborate effectively. The assessment of these duties will be a key aspect of future year's assessments. We encourage the ICB to start to develop their medium term financial plans outlining how system clinical ambitions are to be achieved in a sustainable manner.

#### **Section 5: Helping the NHS support broader social and economic development**

The annual report details a range of work where the NHS is working in partnership with other parties to support broader social and economic development. The Cheshire and Merseyside Anchor Charter was launched in July 2022, which details a range of initiatives that are being undertaken, including a wide range of sustainability and "green" initiatives.

We note that all 9 places within the ICB have Health and Wellbeing Strategies in place, and that these plans are given due regard with respect to your locality work, and that the ICB will be continuing to work with these boards going forward.

#### **Conclusions**

2022/23 has been a year of transition and in making my assessment of your performance I have sought to fairly balance my evaluation of how successfully you have delivered against the demands of establishing your new organisation.

The key statutory duties have been delivered, but there are many challenges for the year ahead. The focus of the ICB should be on driving continued improvement in access to services, both physical and mental health, and in both primary and secondary care. However, this must be done with a relentless focus on productivity and value for money.

I ask that you share my assessment with your leadership team and consider publishing this alongside your annual report at your Annual General Meeting. NHS England will also publish a summary of the outcomes of all ICB performance assessments as part of its 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts.