

The letter this report accompanies sets out the result for the NCAR (Nationally Consistent Assurance Review) for your area's BCF plan. Your plan has been placed in one of four categories, which are:

- Approved
- Approved with support
- Approved subject to conditions
- Not approved

How was the NCAR approval category reached?

The approval categories recognise the challenging task required of local areas as part of an ongoing process to transform local services and improve the lives of people in your community. The aim is to be ready to implement their BCF schemes from next April, so the assurance categories reflect local areas' state of readiness.

The NCAR review provides an assurance rating for each plan based on both its quality as an approach and its deliverability in the local context. There were four key elements to the review:

1. A standardised review of the quality of the plan, by external review experts and a conversation with HWB Boards
2. An assessment of the local context or delivery risks in which plans will be implemented, by NHS England area teams with HWBs and local government regional colleagues
3. Moderation by a reviewer team informed by NHS area team and regional colleagues
4. National calibration overseen by the BCF Task Force

The principles behind the design of the review include:

1. Maximising the time available to develop the plans and minimising the time for assurance
2. Using independent external experts to conduct the reviews
3. Using a consistent set of checks for each plan
4. Giving each health and wellbeing board the opportunity to discuss key risks or issues
5. Keeping the focus on actions and risks
6. Involving area team and regional colleagues from NHS England and the Local Government Association to provide a context for the local system

What does the approval category mean?

Approved	No significant actions required and the plan can move forward to implementation
Approved with support	There are some required actions but these do not represent a fundamental flaw in the plan's approach or a material concern and can be resolved by a clarification or additional information
Approved subject to conditions	While the fundamental approach is suitable, there are specific challenges that need to be addressed before proceeding to implementation, such as: - A material concern about the ability to deliver the national conditions - A material concern about the credibility of the non-elective target, given either current performance or the provider engagement in the plan - The volume of corrective actions or unmitigated risks in the plan being such that a significant level of further work is required before they can be assured
Not approved	The plan falls short of key criteria either because it is not signed-up to by all parties or the fundamental approach is flawed

What happens next?

The letter attached to this report also sets out the next steps arising from your approval category. This will vary according to the nature and degree of actions required. The NCAR Report tabs in this report detail all the actions identified by the NCAR review. These will range from minor clarifications to more substantial concerns, and each local area will be assisted to prioritise and address the identified issues. The next steps for local areas in each approval category are:

Approved	The local area is given full responsibility for its BCF budget, and any ongoing support or oversight will now be handled by NHS England regional and area teams
Approved with support	The local area is given full responsibility for its BCF budget but will be required to submit further information or evidence in line with the outcome of its NCAR report. Ongoing support will be handled by NHS England regional and area teams, who will appoint a relationship manager to agree a timetable with the local area to complete the agreed actions. This manager will coordinate and track the agreed actions, assessing additional evidence supplied and moving plans to a fully approved status; it is expected this will happen quickly, by the end of November
Approved subject to conditions	The local area will be approved to continue improving its plan but will not receive full responsibility for its BCF budget until it meets the conditions set. It will be assigned a named Better Care Advisor who will get in touch shortly to arrange a meeting with the area to understand how they can help to develop an action plan within two weeks to address the NCAR conditions, what support is needed to gear up toward implementation. The local area may need to resubmit its plan in full or part, depending on the nature of the conditions. Once the plans have been reassessed, it is expected that the plan will move to the approved or approved with support category, which is intended to be by the end of December 2014
Not approved	The local area is not given responsibility for its BCF budget at this stage, and by implication will be limited in terms of proceeding implementation activities that commit BCF expenditure. A Better Care Advisor will get in touch shortly to arrange a meeting with the area to understand how they can help to develop an action plan and agree appropriate support. The local area will be required to develop a cohesive and credible plan. It is intended that this is resubmitted by early January 2015, when it will be reassessed, with the intention that the plan will move to the approved or approved with support category.

If you are placed in any approval category other than 'approved', you will need to complete an Action Plan in coordination with your Better Care Advisor or NHS England relationship manager (as appropriate). Details of this is included in the letter but the Action Plan template is included in this report.

What are the conditions?

As set out in the NCAR methodology published in August 2014, areas whose plans fall into the 'Approved Subject to Conditions' category will need to fulfil specified conditions before their plan is fully implemented, you will receive additional support to assist you in meeting these conditions and further details will be included in the accompanying letter.

Theme	Conditions
1. National conditions	Condition 1a: The plan must further demonstrate how it will meet the national condition of protecting social care to ensure that people can still access the services they need
	Condition 1b: The plan must further demonstrate how it will meet the national condition of having an agreed impact on acute care sector to prevent people reaching crisis point and reduce hospital admissions
	Condition 1c: The plan must further demonstrate how it will meet the national condition of Seven day health and care services: to ensure that people can access the care they need when they need it
	Condition 1d: The plan must further demonstrate how it will meet the national condition of Data sharing, including the use of digital care plans and NHS number so people don't endle their story and professionals spend less time filling out paperwork
	Condition 1e: The plan must further demonstrate how it will meet the national condition of Joint assessments so that services can work together to assess and meet people's holistic care needs
	Condition 1f: The plan must further demonstrate how it will meet the national condition of having an accountable professional who can join up services around individuals and prevent fragmentation
2. NHS funding	Condition 2: The plan must further demonstrate how it is meeting the minimum funding requirement for NHS out of hospital services
3. NEL ambition	Condition 3: The plan must further demonstrate how they will deliver the planned NEL reduction
4. Plan quality	Condition 4a: The plan must address the outstanding narrative risks identified in the NCAR report
	Condition 4b: The plan must address the outstanding financial risks identified in the NCAR report
	Condition 4c: The plan must address the outstanding analytical risks identified in the NCAR report

Will there be support around implementation?

The Better Care Fund is developing a range of mechanisms and support to further assist local areas as they move towards implementation. This will take the form of a programme of guidance and evidence, developing system enablers at a local level, including information systems, operational management processes and governance arrangements, as well as developing robust and effective delivery and management arrangements.

Keep in touch

For further information:

- Visit the NHS England BCF web pages, <http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/part-rel/transformation-fund/bcf-plan/>
- Subscribe to the Task Force's weekly bulletin at bettercarefund@dh.gsi.gov.uk