



Cumbria & the North East
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12th May 2015

Dear Martin and Andrea

CCG Assurance Qtr 3 –Darlington

I am writing with regard to the 2014/15 CCG Assurance process for Quarter 3.

You will be aware that NHS England adopted a 'lighter touch' with regard to the assurance process for Quarter 3, in line with the current national guidance that provides greater flexibility on the frequency and scope of assurance conversations. For your CCG, this took the form of discussions regarding the 2014/15 planning round supplemented by the submission of additional assurance information.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for your flexible cooperation with these arrangements during a time of competing demands for all across the health and social care system.

The local assessment for individual CCGs as part of the Quarter 3 process have been the subject of a detailed regional and national consistency and moderation exercise for each of the six domains and the overall assurance headline assessment. Furthermore it is important to note that there has been a change in the national methodology, in that if a CCG has one or more domains assessed as 'Assured with Support' then their overall assurance assessment is similarly 'Assured with Support'.

As a result, DarlingtonCCG is assessed as Assured with Support overall resulting from Domain 3 being Assured with Support, predominantly due to the operational pressures experienced during Quarter 3 and challenges faced in the local economy in delivering the NHS Constitutional Standards, particularly in relation to A&E.

I appreciate that the assurance outcome will be disappointing; however this has been consistently applied on a national basis, with the majority of CCGs similarly affected. Clearly this may have similar implications for Quarter 4 which will be the last such assurance assessment given the assurance framework is being refreshed for 2015/16. I am aware of the significant efforts to ensure the

sustained delivery of the standards in 2015/16 , both within individual organisations and as whole economy under the direction of the SRG. Please let me know if I can support local dialogue if helpful.

Many thanks once again to you and your team for all your continued efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of your local communities.

Yours faithfully.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Slater". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Alison Slater
Director of Delivery
NHS England, Cumbria and North East