Board Assurance Framework Update
Public Board
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Presented for:	Information
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Previous Committees:	N/A

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Exemption	☐**YES** (restricted from the FOIA) ☒**NO** (available to the public under the FOIA)

Link to Strategic Objective	All Strategic Objectives
Link to Provider Capability Assessment	Governance, risk and regulatory
Link to CQC Well-led Statement	Governance, Management and Sustainability
Regulatory Impact	Regulation 17: Good governance

Key points	**Purpose**
A full review has repositioned the Board Assurance Framework around 11 strategic risks aligned to the Trust's purpose and strategic priorities, with clearer ownership, controls, assurance and required actions. The revised framework provides a stronger line of sight from strategic objectives to the principal risks to delivery, the Trust's risk appetite and tolerance, and the evidence available to the Board that controls are effective or need review. The current profile comprises seven significant and four high strategic risks. Following mitigation, the principal residual exposures are financial sustainability (SR02) and operational performance (SR09), both rated 20. The Board is asked to approve the revised BAF and current strategic risk profile, with further development and committee scrutiny continuing over the next six months.	Approval

Risk Appetite Framework			
Level 1 Risk	**Level 2 Risks**	**(Risk Appetite Scale)**	**Impact**
Workforce Risk	Choose an item.	Choose an item	Choose an item.
Operational Risk	Choose an item.	Choose an item	Choose an item.

Clinical Risk	Choose an item.	Choose an item	Choose an item.
Financial Risk	Choose an item.	Choose an item	Choose an item.
External Risk	Strategic Planning Risk - We will deliver Our Vision “to be the best for specialist and integrated care” though the delivery of a set of Strategic Goals and operating in line with Our Values.	Open	Operating within

1. Summary

This report seeks approval from the Board on the review and redevelopment of the Trust's Board Assurance Framework (BAF) and provides a progress report on current assurances and controls. The revised BAF is presented for approval and will remain under active development over the next six months with updates provided to Board as required.

2. Update

BAF Development

The review has moved the BAF from a broad static description of activity to a clearer assessment of the principal threats to delivery of the Trust's purpose and strategic priorities. Eleven strategic risks have been developed and aligned to the strategy, with named executive ownership and Board or committee oversight.

Each strategic risk is presented through a consistent structure. It begins with the strategic risk score and supporting justification, followed by an executive summary of the risk position, the relevant mitigating actions being undertaken, the controls and sources of assurance available to the Board, and finally any significant corporate risks aligned to the strategic risk. This development provides the Board with a stronger line of sight from strategic ambition through to risk exposure, the effectiveness of mitigation and where further assurance is required in order to deliver our strategic objectives. Currently, each risk score rating remains in draft until ratified in the relevant aligned committee.

The revised structure is intended to support a more focused Board discussion on whether the Trust is managing the right risks, whether controls are effective and whether the assurance available is sufficient. It also makes clearer where risk remains above appetite or tolerance and where further action or independent validation is needed.

The BAF will be iterated over the next six months working with Executive and Non-Executive leads. Work will focus on strengthening outcome and trajectory measures, improving the quality of first, second, and third-line assurances, and embedding routine review through the relevant Board committees. This is a fundamental change which will ensure the BAF is utilised within the Trust beyond Board meetings.

What the BAF is telling us

The current strategic risk profile remains material: seven risks are rated significant and four high. All eleven risks are assessed as static at this first reporting point and will be updated each quarter.

Controls and governance arrangements are in place across all strategic priorities, but assurance is not yet consistently strong enough to demonstrate that controls are fully effective or that improvement is sustained. The developing dashboard and quarterly review cycle will strengthen the Board's ability to track changes in exposure, control effectiveness and assurance.

The most material residual risks are financial sustainability (SR02) and operational performance (SR09), both rated 20 and above the Trust's cautious tolerance. Governance and regulatory compliance (SR11) has reduced from a current score of 20 to a residual score of 15 following strengthened governance, assurance and risk management arrangements, but remains significantly above the Trust's averse tolerance. Six residual risks remain above their stated tolerance: quality governance and patient safety (SR01); financial sustainability (SR02); environmental sustainability (SR03); operational performance (SR09); quality, outcomes and unwarranted variation (SR10); and governance and regulatory compliance (SR11).

Five strategic risks are operating within the Trust's stated tolerance: workforce capacity (SR04), colleague experience (SR05), continuous improvement (SR06), research and innovation (SR07), and partnership working (SR08). Within this group, SR05 and SR06 are within appetite, while SR04, SR07 and SR08 remain above appetite but within tolerance; this indicates that the current exposure

is accepted within the Trust's agreed parameters, although continued delivery and stronger assurance are required before further reductions can be evidenced.

3. Quality and Performance Implications

The paper does not propose a change to clinical or operational delivery. It strengthens Board oversight of quality and performance by identifying the strategic risks, assurance gaps and actions requiring executive and committee scrutiny.

4. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from approval of the framework. The BAF identifies financial sustainability (SR02) as one of the Trust's two highest residual strategic risks, rated 20 and above tolerance, reflecting continuing financial pressures and the absence of sufficient evidence to support a reduction at this stage.

5. Risk

The revised BAF is the principal mechanism through which the Board oversees risks to delivery of the Trust's strategy. The highest residual risks are financial sustainability (SR02) and operational performance (SR09), both rated 20. Governance and regulatory compliance (SR11) has a residual score of 15, reflecting strengthened mitigation but remaining above the Trust's averse tolerance. The BAF will be reviewed regularly in committees, with material changes and exceptions reported through the relevant assurance committee and to the Board.

6. Communication and Involvement

The framework has been developed with Executive Director leads and informed by existing Board and committee assurance, the Corporate Risk Register, regulatory improvement arrangements and Trust risk appetite. Further refinement will be undertaken through the relevant Board committees over the next six months.

7. Impact on Equality & Health Inequalities

There are no direct equality impacts arising from this paper. The BAF includes strategic risks relating to differences in access, experience and clinical outcomes, and will support oversight of action to reduce unwarranted variation and health inequalities.

8. Publication Under Freedom of Information Act

This paper has been made available under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

9. Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

1. approve the revised Board Assurance Framework as the Trust's principal mechanism for overseeing strategic risk;
2. take assurance from the clearer alignment between strategic objectives, strategic risks, controls, assurance and required actions;
3. approve the current strategic risk profile, including the identified areas where residual risk remains above tolerance, noting that further validation through the relevant committees may result in subsequent adjustment; and
4. endorse the continued iteration, committee scrutiny and embedding of the framework over the next six months.

10. Supporting Information

The updated Board Assurance Framework is attached.