

Agenda item:	6
Date of meeting:	18 March 2026
Report to the:	Group Trust Board
Title of report:	Chief Executive's Report
Report authors:	Sarah Feal, Company Secretary and Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Lea Fountain, Associate Director of Communications
Executive sponsor:	Matthew Winn, Chief Executive Officer
Recommendation:	Approve
	The internal governance recommendations in section 6.3

Assurance level:	Substantial <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/>
Rationale:	Not Applicable.

1.0 Executive Summary

The report details in section 6.1 important proposals on the changes to children and young people SEND system. The high-level detail that will impact on NHS provision is stated.

The Trusts have received authorisation from NHS England to pursue our merger of the two NHS organisations on 1st April. This is the final national decision-making section of our transaction and brings to end months of work with the regional and national teams. Section 6.2 sets out the next steps in this process.

Section 6.3 contains a mixture of regulatory statements and processes that the Board are asked to note or agree to – include delegation for the annual reports; updates to the governance manual and confirmation that our financial plan for 2026/27 has been agreed by NHS England.

To provide a clear set of clinical and care priorities, driving our focus over the coming years, we are pleased to launch our clinical and care strategy for the new organisation. The Trust Board will track the delivery of these important improvements in customer service and care delivery actively throughout the strategy period.

Finally, section 6.4 contains a range of insights and activity to support our organisations to be a great place to receive care from and provide exemplary support our staff.

2.0 How the report supports tackling Health Inequalities

Not explicitly covered.

3.0 Links to Board Assurance Framework / Trust(s) Risk and Issue Registers

There are none identified.

4.0 Legal and Regulatory requirements

- NHS Act 2006

5.0 Previous consideration by Committee or Executive

28 January 2026, Chief Executive's Report – Group Trust Board.

6.0 Report

6.1 National Updates

6.1.1 SEND reform

The government are [consulting](#) on changes to the SEND system, impacting children, young people and their families - early years settings, schools, health providers and Local Authorities.

The consultation runs until 18th May 2026, and the Trust will be responding to the proposals and as part of our representative network with NHS Providers.

The summary of the proposed changes for health care providers are:

- Health professionals physically embedded in schools — the “Experts at Hand” offer (pages 58–61)
- New accountability and statutory duties placed on ICBs (pages 22–23, 68)
- Health provision formally included in reformed EHCPs (pages 67–69)
- DfE, DHSC, and NHS England work together to ensure a new SaLT advanced practitioner in every ICB area, with a remit to get more therapists and support workers working with schools, colleges and early years settings.

- Fast-track route for children under 5 requiring health and specialist assessment (pages 38, 68)
- Clearer boundaries between clinical and educational responsibility for mental health (pages 32–33)
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), commissioned through NHS England, are to be expanded to cover every school and college by 2029–30, reaching 60% of settings by April 2026 (page 59).
- Specialist Provision Packages will include defined health interventions (pages 64–66)
- Joint working with Best Start Family Hubs, including health visitor integration (pages 38–39)

When the outcomes are published and the impact of community healthcare is known, we will brief the Board.

6.2 Regional Matters

6.2.1 NHS England Approval for merger

The Group has received confirmation that NHS England authorises the two organisations to merge the 1st of April 2026. The separate NHS Trust Boards will be agreeing on Wednesday 18th March 2026, their agreement to continue with the transaction and merge our organisations. Additionally, Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust Board will be re-affirming its agreement to apply for the dissolution of the statutory organisation. This is part of the formal process to merge our two organisations.

6.3 Matters related to our Trust(s)

6.3.1 Governance Manual

The Governance Manual in the Annex provides a comprehensive summary of the corporate governance framework and practices in place for the new East of England Community Health and Care NHS Trust Board and its committees. The document will be subject to review and update during the coming year and was last reviewed and approved by the Trust Board for Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust, 19 March 2025 and the Trust Board for Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, 26 March 2025.

The key changes are set out below:

- New Standing Financial Instructions
- Removal of Group Trust Board Terms of Reference
- Review and update to committee membership
- Review and update to key escalations to the Trust Board
- Removal of the words Group, Joint and Trust(s) throughout the document
- Amendments to all Committee Terms of Reference including the removal of Committee in Common arrangements
- Minor editing

The Group Trust Board is asked to **approve** the manual and recommend this to the East of England Community Health and Care NHS Trust for adoption on 1st April 2026.

6.3.2 Production of the Trust(s) Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

The Group Trust Board is asked to **approve** the delegation of the preparation of the annual report and accounts and submission to NHS England to the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Finance and Resources Officer. Final approval and sign off is reserved to the Trust Board.

6.3.3 Guardian of Safe Working Hours

The guardian of safe working hours ensures that issues of compliance with safe working hours are addressed by the doctor and the employer or host organisation as appropriate. It provides assurance to the board of the employing organisation that doctors' working hours are safe.

There has been **no exception reporting** to the Guardian of Safe Working Hours to either organisation in the last 2 years.

6.3.4 Planning for 2026-27

All organisations are working to deliver the Government mandate for living within the financial envelope set by the Department of health and social care; achieve the elective care waiting times reductions and improve performance in emergency care pathways.

The Trust(s) are submitting a break-even plan, and this has been accepted by NHS England, as our regulator. Further details will be in separate Trust Board papers.

6.3.5 Clinical and care strategy for East of England Community Health and Care NHS Trust

In anticipation for the creation of our new Trust, we have been developing a clinical and care strategy that will become our core planning document for our future direction. Annex B contains the strategy and highlights priority areas the Trust will focus on to improve outcomes for our local populations.

We look forward to developing the approaches and change with our patients, staff and stakeholders.

6.4 Update on our communication activity across both organisations

Providing great local health and care

HIV Confident – We are working towards becoming a HIV Confident Trust to ensure our services are welcoming, informed and equitable for all. Historic media coverage and outdated fears around HIV transmission continue to influence attitudes within healthcare settings. This can result in stigma and unlawful discrimination, with a real impact on people living with HIV. An e-Learning module has been released to help build knowledge and confidence around HIV.

Multi faith prayer room opens – In January we opened a multi faith prayer room at Norwich Community Hospital. The room provides a designated space that is available 24/7 for hospital staff, patients, and visitors of all denominations. The development was supported by the NCH&C Charitable Fund and opened by its Chair, John Kennedy, who is also a Trust Non-Executive Director.

Children's Mental Health Week – A range of information and support tools around mental health have been shared with families during February through our social media accounts. The information covers a range of subjects such as exam stress, belonging, talking about feelings, preparing for transitions, spending quality time together and separation anxiety.

Community Appointment Days – Our physio team in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is planning its next Community Appointment Day, which will take place in March. The events support people with musculoskeletal (MSK) issues and bring patients together with a range of professionals to support with assessments, personalised exercise plans and general health advice.

Collaboration with partners

Partnership agreement renewed with Norfolk County Council - We are pleased to confirm the renewal of our Section 75 agreement with Norfolk County Council, strengthening our long-standing partnership in adult health and social care.

Section 75 enables NHS organisations and councils to share budgets, staff, and responsibilities, helping to reduce duplication and deliver more integrated, efficient services.

The renewed agreement will focus on three key strategic priorities:

- Prevention and early help
- Integrated community services
- Intermediate and unplanned care

This continues a successful partnership that has been in place since 2014.

Valuing our people

Creating our new Trust – We've communicated extensively with our people to support them as we transition into a new Trust. Regular email updates, online briefing sessions and an online support hub have kept people updated on key changes. In addition, there have been regular drop-in sessions for staff during our TUPE consultation, and reassurance that staff transferring to the new Trust will preserve their existing terms and conditions. We've also recognised the emotions people may feel about new beginnings and saying goodbye to our previous Trusts, so we have supported teams with celebration events.

Open Space Sessions – We are holding monthly online sessions for colleagues to come together and support each other, in relation to matters related to cultural diversity. The Open Space sessions are open to all – both culturally diverse colleagues and those who wish to offer support and allyship. Delia Mills and Beverleigh Senior, the founders of [See Me First](#) at Whittington Health NHS Trust, presented at our February meeting.

Staff awards – We've continued to celebrate our staff with monthly awards. Recent winners include:

- Hayley Sansbury, Community Occupational Therapist from South Place Norfolk
- Jemma Watkins, School Nurse for the South Cambridgeshire Healthy Child Programme
- Katie Sayer, Infant Feeding Call Navigator for the Norfolk Healthy Child Service
- Rona Holloway, Family Public Health Nurse for the Norfolk Healthy Child Service
- Evie Spaul, Project Manager

Apprenticeships – Two of our people received highly commended awards at the Apprenticeship Norfolk Awards. Zoe Mutty and Louise Woods are Master of Science clinical associate in psychology degree apprentices (Children & Young People) at the University of East Anglia. Both were nominated for their dedication to learning, compassion, skill, innovation and the real difference they are making in their communities. During February we also celebrated National Apprenticeship Week, shining a spotlight on the incredible journeys of our apprentices and the vital role they play in shaping the future of the NHS. Within both clinical and corporate roles, these stories highlight how apprenticeships have opened doors, built confidence, and inspired others to follow in their footsteps.

Ramadan – Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a period of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. During the month we've celebrated the event with our staff and provided tools for managers on how they can support our colleagues during Ramadan.

Secure our future through innovation

Trial of Ambient Voice Technology (AVT) – Our services are currently trialling AVT, which is speech recognition software that listens during a patient consultation and helps record notes automatically. This means the clinician spends less time typing and more time focusing on the patient.

We want to see if AVT can:

- Save time for health professionals
- Improve the quality of your consultations and visits
- Help get letters to patients faster
- Reduce waiting times for patients

Patients will be told if AVT is going to be used and can choose to opt out.

AI-enabled physiotherapy service shortlisted for national awards - We are delighted that our innovative AI-powered physiotherapy service, developed in partnership with Flok Health, has been shortlisted for three prestigious awards:

- HSJ Partnership Awards - Primary and Community Care Project of the Year
- HSJ Partnership Awards - Best Contribution to Improving the Efficiency of NHS Services
- HSJ Digital Awards - Driving Change through AI and Automation Award

Our Cambridgeshire and Peterborough service was the first NHS community service in England to use the AI clinic. The service provided same-day personalised back-pain assessment and treatment through a smartphone app.

During the 12-week pilot in 2025 more than 2,500 patients accessed the service. Overall MSK waiting times dropped by 44% and back-pain waiting lists reduced by 55%.

Following the successful trial, we are now aiming to secure a longer-term arrangement with an AI provider to help us support patients across all our physiotherapy services.

£2m investment in clean energy upgrades – We have benefited from further Government funding for green energy in the February. Building on existing funding provided in October, this combined to almost £2 million in Government investment to reduce energy costs and support environmental sustainability.

The funding will support:

- Solar panel installation
- Energy management systems
- Low-energy LED lighting

These improvements will be rolled out across sites in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Luton, helping reduce our carbon footprint and operating costs.

Gold Sustainability Award - Our Suffolk Dental team has been awarded with gold standard Green Impact for Dentistry award.

The Green Impact for Dentistry Toolkit aims to help oral healthcare professionals reduce their environmental impact, improve practice sustainability, and contribute to national "Net Zero" ambitions.

Annex:

- A. Governance Manual
- B. Clinical and Care Strategy