

Introduction and Background

The Stockport Locality Quality Group (SLQG) meets monthly to oversee the quality, safety, and performance of health and care services for the Stockport population. The group includes input from local providers and the wider Integrated Care Board (ICB), including out-of-area services. SLQG reviews system-wide quality, safety, and performance data, identifies risks, holds stakeholders accountable, and highlights areas of good practice. Information from Stockport and external providers is analysed to inform key actions. These briefing outlines work priorities and significant challenges requiring the Board's attention.

Planned Closure of Hilltop Hall

Greater Manchester ICB has been notified by Harbour Healthcare of their decision to close Hilltop Hall Nursing Home. This follows a challenging year marked by an 'inadequate' rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Despite targeted support from the Local Authority and ICB Quality Teams, the home was only able to improve to a 'requires improvement' rating in September. Persistent challenges have led to the decision that the home is no longer sustainable. Harbour Healthcare has given 28 days' notice but has indicated some flexibility in the closure timeline.

Assurance and Next Steps:

- All residents have been allocated a social worker to support their relocation.
- A coordinated approach is in place to ensure safe and appropriate placements, with ongoing engagement with families.
- The ICB Quality Team continues to oversee the transition process to mitigate risks and ensure continuity of care.
- Lessons learned from this closure will inform future interventions in struggling care homes.

Equality Quality Impact Assessments (EQIA)

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) evaluates how a policy, project, or service change may affect individuals with protected characteristics, ensuring no unlawful discrimination occurs.

EQIAs support:

- Policy and practice review to prevent discrimination or disadvantage.
- Promotion of equity and service improvement.
- Assessment of potential impacts on diverse populations.

Under GM policy, an EQIA is required before system changes are approved. This month, the SLQG reviewed and approved the following EQIAs:

- Swanbourne Gardens Respite Facility: Service Review
- Boundary Adjustment – Chadsfield Medical Practice: Approved.
- Broomwell Healthwatch Ltd: Extension of ECG service contract for one year.
- Medical Imaging Partnership: Continuation of direct access MRI services for Stockport spinal pathway.
- Viaduct Care CIC Contract Review: Approval of GP Federation contract extension.
- Francis House Children's Hospice: To re-commission the service by grant agreement to 2026.

Adult Social Care (ASC) Charging Policy: Adult Social Care (Stockport MBC) will implement several changes to its charging policy from April 2025. A public consultation ran from 21 November 2024 to 8 January 2025 on the proposed changes. An update was provided on the key changes to the Policy.

Rapid Quality Review (RQR)

Paediatric Audiology Service at Stockport NHS FT

Stockport NHS Foundation Trust provides paediatric audiology services, including newborn hearing screening. Last year, a national review raised concerns about how specialist hearing tests were performed at a number of hospitals across the country. Whilst Stockport NHS FT were not one of the trusts originally identified, they found potential issues with the accuracy of some children's hearing tests. Following this there was a rapid review, chaired by NHS Greater Manchester and supported by NHS England, to identify children who might need a further hearing assessment. In December 2024, this review recommended that the paediatric audiology service would need to pause whilst additional work was undertaken to ensure safety.

Key Findings and Actions:

- A five-year review identified 334 children requiring recall.
- Competency gaps were identified within the audiology service.
- Recalled patients are being assessed by Manchester Foundation Trust (MFT) under a mutual aid agreement.
- Priority 1 waiting list cases are being managed by MFT due to local service limitations.
- New referrals to the Stockport service remain paused.

Challenges and Mitigation:

- **Capacity Constraints:** Manchester Foundation Trust (MFT) support is limited, and additional mutual aid from within Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board (GM ICB) has not been secured. Wider NHS support is now being explored. Currently, 1,905 children are waiting to be seen across all pathways, leading to significant delays.
- **Service Continuity:** While paediatric audiology is not typically outsourced, independent sector options may be considered if NHS capacity remains constrained.
- **Governance and Oversight:**
 - Two project groups meet fortnightly to oversee the improvement action plan and mutual aid solutions.
 - Monthly updates are provided to the NHS England Northwest Paediatric Audiology Oversight Group.
 - Risks are logged on the locality risk register and escalated to GM ICB and NHS England.

Adult Community Eating Disorder Services

Adult Community Eating Disorder Services (CEDs) are a vital part of mental health care. National guidance for commissioners and providers highlights that the best approach to delivering these services is through a dedicated, multidisciplinary team, offering community-based care. This model is supported by intensive day patient or inpatient treatment for individuals at high physical or psychiatric risk who cannot be safely managed in the community.

Oakwood Psychology Services has provided high-quality adult Community Eating Disorder Services in Stockport for a considerable time. However, a significant gap has been identified in local provision, particularly in establishing an effective physical health pathway with medical monitoring. To address this, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board (GM ICB) is commissioning a new provider with a strong track record in delivering community-based eating disorder services. Negotiations are currently underway with an experienced NHS provider, and due diligence is in progress to ensure financial and contractual governance requirements are met. All parties acknowledge the tight timescales, and work is progressing swiftly to facilitate a seamless transition.



Transition Planning:

Exit Planning: Meetings are taking place with Oakwood Psychology Services to manage the transition effectively.

Current Service Provision: Oakwood continues to provide treatment for existing patients and maintain a secure, non-identifiable log of service users requiring transfer, ensuring adherence to information governance protocols.

Stakeholder Support: Oakwood remains available to offer advice and support to key referrers and stakeholders regarding their patients.

New Service Implementation:

The new provider will deliver a NICE-compliant, evidence-based eating disorder service, incorporating a dedicated physical health pathway and medical monitoring—an element Oakwood was not commissioned to provide. Oakwood stopped accepting new referrals in December to focus on completing assessments and treatment for its existing caseload. Throughout the transition period, Oakwood will continue to support referrers and stakeholders.

Risk Mitigation and Assurance:

Oakwood's contract will run until 31st March, ensuring service users and their families remain informed.

Once the new provider is confirmed, they will initiate engagement activities, including meetings and roadshows with GPs and key stakeholders.

Communication with existing service users will follow strict information governance protocols to ensure a smooth transition.

There is a recognised risk due to the gap between Oakwood ceasing services and the new provider commencing. Work is ongoing to establish robust risk plans for all identified individuals.

Negotiations are underway to mitigate risks by securing local providers for interim support.

Conclusion and Board Considerations

This report provides assurance that SLQG continues to proactively monitor and address key quality challenges in Stockport. While significant progress has been made in areas such as EQIA compliance and audiology service reviews, challenges remain, particularly regarding:

- Hilltop Hall closure: ensuring smooth resident transitions and capturing lessons learned.
- Paediatric audiology risks: addressing service gaps and securing additional capacity.
- Eating disorder service transition: managing provider change while maintaining high-quality care.

The Board is invited to:

- Acknowledge the progress made in addressing these challenges.
- Provide input on risk mitigation strategies and future service planning.

Ongoing updates will be provided as these matters develop.

