

Key Messages National Customer Board September 2021

Key points

- The Chair thanked Jim Spittle for his contribution to the Customer Boards as this would be his last meeting. Thanks, were also asked to be passed on to Steve Foulser as he would be leaving NHS Supply Chain at the end of the month. This would also be Mick Guymers last meeting as Chair of the Northern Customer Board, Mick was thanked for his role and Jonathan was welcomed as incoming Chair. Jodi Chapman and Heather Tierney-Moore were welcomed to their first meeting
- Performance summary from NHS Supply Chain included; £105.7m savings year to date have been delivered, customer satisfaction survey results are due imminently, these will be shared as soon as they are available along with the clinical customer satisfaction results, overview of service levels were provided, noting that there is recognition from a customer perspective this needs to be reviewed
- The Chair provided a brief overview of the spending review and the challenges this has brought. Trusts need to move back to performance disciplines through H2 and in full from 1 April 2022. H2 planning guidance is due this week, it is expected that there will be a 3% cost reduction which will create tension and pressure in the system putting focus back on savings.
- Update was provided on behalf of NHSE/I, key points included; recruitment is underway for the Chief Commercial Officer Role for NHSE/I, learning for how the medicines team have worked with regulators particularly around sustainability, there is a supply chain sustainability public paper being issued on 30 September 2021, this will be shared across the system, Social Value guidance will be issued out in October, there will be a supporting toolkit to help with assessing the value. Sustainability is a real priority; Lord Prior held a meeting with top suppliers where they signed a commitment to work with the NHS on their goals
- New procurement regulations are due out on 1 April 2022, it is expected there will be a communication out to support the NHS. All Heads of Procurement need to be confident in using these new regulations
- Point was raised that engagement is intermittent between NHSE/I and the Regional Customer Boards, this should be reviewed
- NHS Supply Chain transferring to NHSI/I – working smarter together, the focus of the discussion was around language and emotive points, summary was given that this is an exciting time with lots of opportunities
- More detailed discussion on cost pressures and supply chain disruption was facilitated, with an action to establish a task and finish group to work on this

Summary of escalations from the Regional Customer Boards

- Recognition that time and resource is an issue for trusts, members were asked how greater collaboration could be achieved to kick start some of the work which had been delayed. Accessing scoped opportunities which have not been progressed, use ICS communication channels to accelerate these, now is the time to connect on these with the H2 target. A lot of ground to cover on how the ICSs are progressing, or not and the impact on procurement
- Sustainability was a big discussion in the regions, the offer was made for an NQC training session
- There is a need for improved early warning communications around supply chain disruptions, with a feeling of mistrust, how can more proactive communications be achieved
- There is a need for clarity, especially around PPE and what will be charged for
- Transparency around the Category Towers, feedback that they are not resilient and are not working, there is soft intelligence that staff turnover and agency levels are high
- Requirement to evolve a risk framework between NHS Supply Chain, ICSs and Customer Boards
- Assurance around price rises and that the Category Towers are doing everything they can on this
- The level of reporting needs to be reviewed; example given was around service level reporting
- Reflection was made that trust and confidence needs to be developed on both sides. There needs to be improved visibility of stock levels and requirements across the system in order to manage the supply chain more effectively. The impact of how the early days of how the pandemic was managed has influenced how people operate.

