

BUSINESS CONTINUITY FOLLOWING CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Agenda no: 6

Purpose of the paper

For Information, Discussion and, if required, Decision

Background and context

As set out in the Service Continuity paper for the Board Meeting of 27th March, the coronavirus COVID-19 infection has been declared a pandemic by the WHO. The UK's response has included increasing numbers and intensity of interventions, in order to suppress the infection rate, protect people and the NHS. The paper included some detail of the lock down ordered by the government, on 23rd March.

This situation will remain review, until review c 13th April. It is anticipated when preparing this paper (1st April) that these restrictions will remain, at least, or even be intensified, until June 2020.

Where are we now?

The board met on 27th March 2020, via Zoom video-conference. The Board received significant assurance from the Chief Officer with regards to all services remaining in place. The board thanked the Chief Officer, senior team and all staff and volunteers for their flexibility, creativity and commitment, in order to enable this. These thanks were conveyed to staff by the Chair, through note to all staff, issued later on 27th March.

The board reviewed significant risks, and received assurance, with regard to: people (staff, volunteers, service users); communications (staff, volunteers, service users, funders, the public); financial and commissioning issues. The board considered its ongoing agenda for the near future, and deferred a full discussion to its next meeting, proposed for 3rd April.

A further operational update will be provided verbally on 3rd April.

The Charity Commission updated its [guidance, dated 31st March 2020](#). The main additions appear to be at the end of the document, and relate to: reminder of [safeguarding duties](#) (updated October 2019); and update to charities' [statement of accounting and reporting](#) (SORP), a framework for accounting and reporting, designed to: help charity trustees meet their legal requirement for their accounts, that has been updated (date not provided) in the light of COVID-19.

The NCVO has provided [information, dated 25th March 2020](#), to help charities decide what steps they need to take in light of the spread of the covid-19 virus. The information is provided under the following headings: [protecting your staff, volunteers and beneficiaries](#); [contingency planning and financial implications](#).

The board agreed its forward plan for 2020/21 at its meeting of 25th February 2020. The latest version of the forward plan, including routine and 2020/21 specific items is attached to this report.

The board asked the chairs of its sub-committees to identify key issues for review at the meeting of 3rd April.

Tamsin Walker, had tendered her resignation, to take effect 3rd April 2020, in order to take up a PhD place, at short notice. She has, following the pandemic, requested postponement of her end date until September, due to postponement of the start of her PhD. The Chief Officer has agreed the postponed date.

Martin Roberts, having agreed to lead the membership review, and attended a meeting to progress this on 9th March, and agreed actions at the meeting, tendered his resignation from the HM board of trustees, on 11th March, with immediate effect. Martin wrote "I don't plan to go into the details on reasons why, but increasing commitments at work coupled with other significant challenges/commitments outside of work have resulted in the decision I have taken. Please be assured, it's a decision I have not taken lightly given my passion not just towards mental wellbeing, but also to the tremendous service Healthy Minds delivers for the residents across Calderdale." He assures me that his "decision will certainly not stop [him] from supporting the charity with activities and fundraising within Lloyds Bank Group. It has been a privilege and honour to have served as a trustee, albeit for a very short period and I know under the amazing stewardship of yourself, the charity has a very bright future." He notes that "I am sure you would want to pick up the phone and or meet to discuss further. However, I would prefer not to at this present time." Whilst respecting Martin's wishes not to phone, I have written to Martin, without response as yet.

The board discussed on 25th February the desirability of recruitment to the board. It was agreed that the board was strong, that recruitment was not an urgent priority, but that when recruitment is undertaken, the priorities would be for enhancing the diversity of the board and strengthening succession planning. The chair of trustees has been approached by four people who have expressed an interest in becoming a trustee and has met with each one.

What are the key issues?

There is a high volume of guidance and information, which is subject to change, as the pandemic impacts on the UK as a whole and on HM. Whilst useful and well-intended, there is a risk of there being too much information. There is a risk, too, of always getting the balance right between addressing urgent operational issues and the ongoing business of HM. The commitment of trustees in attending last week's board meeting at short notice, and in calling a follow-up meeting, has mitigated this risk: last week focussed more on the urgent operational; this week's meeting is the board's opportunity, not just to review the

operational business of HM, but take control of short and medium-term business priorities. At an operational level, the Chief Officer has recommended reliance on a limited number of key sources and guidance, to avoid guidance overload.

The chairs of sub-committees have suggested the following main issues:

- 2020/21 Business Plan – revision to timescales for development and sign off.
- Impact Report – consideration to timescales for responsibility for development and timescales.
- 2020/21 Budget – finalisation and timescale for approval.
- Project funding updates and/or financial risks
 - SafeSpace a) extension b) tender.
 - Assurance regarding other projects' funding.
- Communication, including e-newsletter, with donors (individual; corporate).
- Utilisation of social media platforms (Facebook; LinkedIn).
- Staffing
 - Support for staff wellbeing.
 - Progress/pause on current recruitment: Marketing and Communications Officer; Time Out Project Worker; Peer Support Project Worker.
 - Consideration of recruitment freeze.
 - Contingency arrangements in event of sickness absence, self-quarantine, carer support a) Frontline staff b) Back office staff c) Chief officer or operational manager.
 - Policy review (sickness absence, carer/annual leave).
 - Communication with staff e.g. furlough decision.

The board forward plan includes important business items specific to 2020/21, that go beyond strengthening our governance: membership review; diversity strategy; diversification of income. We will need to consider the timescales for these items, including, following Martin's resignation, leading the membership review.

The intention of Tamsin to leave in the late summer/early autumn, provides an opportunity to consider a remodelling of the Recovery and Support project, to reabsorb the functions of Employment Support. Tamsin has a broad experience, and can be deployed as a project worker without portfolio. The chief officer will give trustees further information, and provide an outline proposal, with regard to Recovery and Support and Employment Support, and seek trustee approval in principle. A full proposal, including funding arrangements, will come to the next meeting of the board.

The chair will not bring a detailed proposal on trustee recruitment on 1st April, but will make some outline suggestions as to a way forward, for the board to consider.

What is asked of trustees?

1. Consider the operational update that will be given verbally by our Chief Officer.
2. Agree trustee approach for reviewing in detail the Charity Commission and NCVO guidance.
3. Agree that, at an operational level, reliance is placed on a limited number of key sources and guidance.
4. Consider and respond to the issues raised by the chairs of the board's sub-committees.
5. Consider revision to forward plan timescales, particularly with regard to 2020/21 specific items.
6. Agree in principle the chief officer's outline proposal, with regard to Recovery and Support and Employment Support, pending a full proposal to the next board meeting.
7. Consider whether and how to recruit a trustee to replace Martin Roberts and/or enhance the board with regard to succession planning and diversity.
8. Consider when next to meet as a board.

Finance

Whilst there are no financial implications as a consequence of this paper, there may be resource implications (income, expenditure) as a result of the impact of the pandemic: temporary service changes, staff in self-isolation, government continuity grants, funding commitments etc..

Recommendation

The board is asked to note the information provided in advance, discuss the implications of for ongoing board business, and, as required, make any such decisions that follow from its discussion.