

Membership Prospectus

Introduction

The purpose of this membership prospectus is to inform potential new members about the Mental Health Northants Collaboration (MHNC) which was established by voluntary and community groups in Northamptonshire to collectively offer a comprehensive range of mental health services. The prospectus sets out a model for a new joint venture and an invitation to organisations to apply for full or associate membership.

The Voluntary and Community sector encompasses a range of independent, not-for-profit organisations, including voluntary sector agencies, charities, community groups and social enterprises. It precludes statutory or other government or government-sponsored organisations, and private or any other organisation, including a CIC limited by shares, which involves distribution, by any degree, of surpluses to private shareholders.

The membership prospectus seeks to:

- Set out the vision, mission, underpinning values and principles of the collaboration
- Outline the legal and organisational structure and governance arrangements
- Identify the main operational issues
- Describe the benefits and expectations associated with consortium membership
- Articulate a set of membership eligibility criteria
- Explain the process for applying for membership

The primary goal of the collaboration is to improve mental health services for local people through the provision of high quality and responsive support together with generalist and specialist services and initiatives. The focus of the collaboration is to build on the capacity and track records of voluntary and community organisations and to deliver a range of health and social care services at the point of need.

MHNC achieves this by securing contracts for the delivery of mental health and social care services and related activities and by managing revenue through a shared approach. The collaboration works towards building the capacity of member organisations through opening up new contracting opportunities and consolidating existing revenue streams, promoting joint working and encouraging organisational learning and development.

The collaboration emerged after years of informally working together and is a registered Charity (No 1161753) and became a company Limited by Guarantee in 2014 (Company Registration No 9569973).

MHNC is managed by Steering Group or Board (see Appendix 2) comprising of representatives appointed each year by member organisations (see Appendix 1).

All members of the working group represent “not-for-private-profit” local organisations working to tackle mental health issues and to improve quality of life. Though the partner organisations share a common goal, they are all separate, independent agencies with their own management and accountability structures and with their own unique ways of working. This difference and independence will be protected and strengthened under the collaboration arrangement.

The development and formation of the collaboration was supported by “Community Right to Challenge” funding. Organisations that wish to apply for membership of the collaboration must complete an application form.

Collaboration Model and Operating Structure

Northamptonshire is in the East Midlands consists of seven borough councils; Corby, Daventry, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Wellingborough.

The establishment of a joint venture amongst not-for-private-profit mental health services and agencies across Northamptonshire demonstrates strong strategic fit. The MHNC is a strategic response to the growing requirement to establish joint, large scale tendering arrangements, bringing a number of separate, independent providers together under one umbrella synonymous with a 'single point of contracting'. It will combine the benefits of large and small-scale approaches – a rationalised sub-regional structure dovetailing with independent delivery units responsive to local or specific client group needs.

The joint venture is organised as a formal collaboration. In other words, it is a separate legal body, a charitable company, with the provider organisations taking up membership of this body.

The defining features of this model are:

- The member organisations make up the collaboration board.
- The joint venture creates a single point of contracting with the voluntary sector. Commissioning bodies contract with the consortium which is then responsible for setting up and managing sub-contracts with individual collaboration members.
- It operates with a hub and spokes structure. The hub is the central infrastructure or staff resource that acts as the executive of the consortium, including negotiating and sub-letting contracts, while the spokes are the individual member organisations.

The hub is an internal mechanism that acts as the intermediary between funders and regulatory bodies and the voluntary and community sector organisations providing frontline services. It has a small staff team tasked with leadership, negotiation, tender writing, contract management, resource allocation and quality improvement. The hub ensures smooth and efficient contract management, and proactively seeks out new funding and business development opportunities on behalf of the membership.

As well as its financial and business development brief, the hub is tasked with ensuring arrangements to build the capacity of member organisations so that they are better able to meet the requirements and thresholds of commissioners. This ranges from arranging informal networking opportunities through to organising formal training. In addition, the hub seeks to develop and deliver capacity building through or in partnership with local development agencies, for example, Councils for Voluntary Service.

How the contracting and subcontracting process works in practice

- Shapes tender frameworks so that they are fit for purpose in terms of meeting the needs of the client groups that are being targeted by the member organisations
- Identifies appropriate tender opportunities for the consortium to pursue
- Submits consortium tender proposals. Subject to the tender being successful, awards subcontracts to members, based on either joint delivery planning or an open, competitive internal tendering process
- Monitors and reports performance against subcontracts

Vision, Mission, Underpinning Values & Business Principles

The shared vision of the collaboration

Individuals who experience mental health problems are free from discrimination and prejudice and are valued and accepted within society.

The mission of the collaboration

Local providers working together to deliver quality services to improve mental health and well-being of individuals and families.

Underpinning Values

The following values underpin services and activities delivered through the collaboration:

- Holistic, person-centred, non-judgmental and anti-discriminatory practice that embodies respect and empathy for individuals
- Addressing mental health inequalities through prevention strategies
- Linking health and social care interventions with wider community regeneration
- Using mental health and wider well-being initiatives and projects to generate added value by promoting social cohesion, developing local social capital and building sustainable community capacity
- Commitment to self-empowerment and enabling individuals to take control over their own lives and to be the originators and catalysts of their own mental health and well-being improvement strategies
- Supporting individuals to identify and to fulfil their own potential
- Encouraging mutuality through collective approaches to self-help and self-care
- Championing and promoting social justice and equality
- Provision of free or affordable services at the point of need

The work of the MHNC is governed by an unswerving commitment to the needs of end-users of the mental health services provided through member organisations. All decisions about MHNC strategy, financial objectives, joint working etc are taken from the standpoint of ensuring that client and beneficiary needs are met effectively.

Core Operating Values

Voluntary and community sector focus

The collaboration is a partnership of agencies operating in the voluntary and community sector. What binds the collaborators is a clear commitment to personal and community mental health benefits and the intention to build on the value driven approach of the not-for-profit, independent sector to deliver MHNC vision.

Objectivity and impartiality

The collaboration is focused impartially upon the objective needs of all the member organisations, which are equal in status. It will not be dominated by the particular self-interests of certain organisations or individuals.

Collaboration members need to strive at all times to be open, honest and transparent in their involvement in MHNC affairs. Representatives of the collaboration are required to operate with integrity and to work for the good of the whole MHNC.

Where there are a number of member organisations that can demonstrate that they can provide activities and services in line with relevant commissioning criteria, any associated contract income secured is subcontracted to those organisations on a transparent, fair and equitable basis, proportionate to delivery capacity and subject to appropriate quality and monitoring and reporting thresholds.

Member ownership and control

The members of the collaboration own and control it. The joint venture is organised along formal lines, as an independent legal entity. A key feature of this model is member ownership. This provides for an inclusive and dynamic partnership where members and through them, clients and end service users, are able to input ideas and shape strategy and provision on an ongoing basis.

The MHNC combines support with self-reliance. By bringing providers together in a single point of contracting, essential support and enabling infrastructure is created in the form of a central hub. At the same time, collaboration members control the work of this hub through a democratic governance arrangement.

Influencing patterns of supply

Through creating a unified delivery mechanism, the collaboration seeks to influence the strategic direction of voluntary and community sector-sponsored mental health and social care provision throughout Northamptonshire. The collaboration gives the sector the capacity to plan and coordinate resource allocation in the most efficient and effective way, ensuring optimal provision for mental health issues.

Protecting autonomy and strengthening organisations

The collaboration has been set up as a separate legal entity with each member retaining its independence, local autonomy and accountability. The collaboration is not designed to threaten the autonomy of individual organisations, nor is it about merging or subsuming their independence into a larger structure.

Within this, the hub is a mechanism internal to the collaboration, serving the needs of each individual member organisation, and not an external, self-serving structure.

The organisations that make up the collaboration membership base are all different, with their own special and unique ways of working designed in specific response to a particular set of circumstances and conditions in which they are operating. The collaboration will be sensitive to this diversity in implementing any strategy to standardise systems, processes and methods across the provider network.

It respects the special strengths and particular approaches of different member organisations and aims to build their capacity to become more effective as independent, locally accountable bodies, including bidding for and managing their own funds and managing their own quality improvement strategies.

Inherent dynamism and responsiveness

MHNC does not operate as a closed circle of collaborators but will be open to the potential for new members to join. This commitment to ensuring contestability will promote and safeguard vitality and dynamism within the membership.

The collaboration actively encourages member organisations to establish partnerships and networks outside of the collaboration so that they can develop their potential further.

Business Principles

The collaboration will:

- Apply business skills and commercial principles in order to flourish as a social enterprise operating within the independent sector
- Set clear business objectives
- Explore and take advantage of opportunities within a planned approach, drawing on the strategic position within Northamptonshire
- Only pursue contracting opportunities that are in the best interests of the MHNC
- Create and use management information as an integral part of planning
- Undertake long-range business and financial forecasting
- Focus on outputs rather than inputs
- Adopt a whole organisation approach to developing business awareness, skills and understanding; in other words, ensuring that business development capability is not just invested in a few individuals but embedded across the hub, board and membership
- Recruit collaboration staff with appropriate business skills and understanding
- Enhance the business skills of staff through Continuous Professional Development
- Employ business and financial analytical tools (e.g. competitor analysis, breakeven analysis etc) as a natural, routine function of maintaining the collaboration
- As part of a continuous risk management strategy:
- Take decisions about areas of potential work and activity on the basis of sound business and financial analysis
- Review viability of existing areas of work on an ongoing systematic basis
- Maintain strong internal research and development capacity to underpin analysis of the opportunities and threats within the environment and to inform business development

The collaboration has an independent legal status and is incorporated as a charitable company.

There is a board of six members composed of chief executives or senior managers from the member organisations. In addition, three trustees are independent individuals with an interest in the delivery of public services by the voluntary and community sector. The latter will be in the form of co-options from key external stakeholder agencies and are aimed at building a strong degree of independence into the board structure.

The board meets on a regular basis and is responsible for the strategic management and direction of MHNC. Accountability for the work of the collaboration work rests wholly with the board. The leadership and overall strength of the board is essential to the success of the collaboration as a whole.

Legal Structure and Governance Arrangements

Trustees retire on a three-year rotation and vacant places on the board are the subject of open contest through the Annual General Meeting (AGM). There is a process of application and nomination, followed by an election. All member organisations are eligible to vote at the AGM.

Board members are elected on the basis of a Job Description and Person Specification that sets out the relevant skills and experience required, including business skills and entrepreneurial acumen. The officer positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary are elected by the collaboration membership on an annual basis.

The board is responsible for ensuring that service users have a voice within the governance structure.

All board members are required to provide a list of involvement and association with other organisations and to declare any potential conflicts of interest that might arise in carrying out any of their duties.

Decisions at board meetings are based on a consensus of those present. However, where this is not possible, decisions are taken on a majority vote.

The Collaboration Business Development Manager, who has executive responsibility for the day-to-day management of the hub, reports directly to the Board.

Benefits of Collaboration Membership and Associated Expectations

Quality Improvement

- Enables its member organisations to meet the needs of clients and service users better by increasing provider capacity and by focusing on sustained improvements in the quality and impact of frontline service provision
- Encourages the sharing of expertise and good practice
- Facilitates the joint delivery of services and activities

Negotiating Power and Funding Prospects

- Increases the prospects of winning tenders and securing funding at a sub-regional level; this enables member organisations to build on their existing funding bases
- Fosters greater negotiating and bargaining power through increased scale and capacity
- Enhances member organisations' competitiveness within the operating environment
- Creates a single, unified point of contracting, and in so doing increases attractiveness to contractors and funders
- Creates more business-like, sustainable infrastructure

Image and Profile

- Increases marketing capacity, with marketing and promotional activity undertaken individually by member organisations being supplemented by centralised, MHNC-wide actions in this area
- Extends and heightens member organisations' public profile

Resource Use

- Frees up member organisations to maintain, consolidate and enhance their core focus on frontline delivery by transferring, by some degree, bureaucratic requirements to a specialised enabling and support infrastructure (the hub)
- Brings technical benefits through efficient contract management. For example, contractual output trading would be possible between member institutions.
- Generates economies of scale and efficiency savings through rationalisation

Strategic Capability

- Improves strategic planning through a centralised, co-ordinated function that guides, shapes and collates the different, separate strategic aims and objectives of each member organisation
- Establishes more concerted and sustainable research and development capacity through hub infrastructure, resulting in greater focus on innovation and new ways of working
- Enables joint needs assessment and programme planning to be undertaken.

Main Operational Issues

Expectations of Collaboration Members

- Interest in, support for, and promotion of the development and furtherance of the collaboration as a whole and not merely the respective agendas or vested interests of certain member organisations.
- Collaboration members must be open, honest and transparent in their involvement in consortium affairs and collaboration representatives must work for the good of the whole MHNC.
- Contributing ideas to the further development of the collaboration
- Contributing ideas and information to, and providing support for, joint tenders
- Participating in capacity building initiatives

Roles and Functions of the Central Hub

The collaboration hub seeks out proactively, on behalf of the membership, new funding and business development opportunities at a sub-regional level and ensures smooth and efficient contract management. Further information is in the section “Consortium Model and Operating Structure”.

Roles and Functions of Member Organisations

The following roles and functions are in addition to the expectations of member organisations:

- To design and deliver high-quality and responsive health and social care services
- To provide for the hub information relating to organisational aims and objectives, output performance, financial expenditure as required for contract purposes
- To participate in collaboration network meetings
- To manage the hub staff and the affairs of MHNC through active participation (either directly or via accountable representatives) on the collaboration board

The importance of effective and efficient transfer of monitoring information from member organisations holding sub-contracts to the central hub cannot be over-stated.

Effective information flow is the lifeblood of the collaboration.

Proposed Staffing Profile of the Hub

The hub will maintain a small staff establishment. The collaboration hub needs to be sufficiently dynamic to expand and, if necessary, contract in line with fluctuations in the funding market, increasing and decreasing its staff establishment to balance with the inflow of cash. For this purpose the central hub will be seen merely as a business instrument, an internal mechanism that enables the collaboration to function, rather than as a key stakeholder within the company.

This flexibility and responsiveness, built into the core operations of the collaboration, is essential to its long-term viability and success.

Funding Strategy

The MHNC will focus on securing public service contracts at a regional level, up-scaling in scope and capacity in order to be in a position to achieve this. The long-term goal is for the hub to be sustainable through the allocation of a 5-10% top-slice of recurrent contract funding. In addition, the collaboration is seeking venture capital to help with start up costs and provide working capital as part of a three year business plan.

How funding is allocated between the central hub and member organisations

MHNC, through the board, determines an appropriate division of funding between the central hub and the member organisations. An underlying principle of the internal resource allocation ratio between the hub and member organisations is that a clear majority of funding should be invested in delivery with more money getting through to the individual client, and correspondingly less being absorbed by bureaucracy and administration.

Initial business planning provides a financial model where the internal resource allocation would be 9:1 in favour of delivery (that is, member organisations and direct services to clients and beneficiaries). As the collaboration evolves and becomes more efficient, there would be efforts to further reduce the proportion going to central administration, working towards a ratio of 19:1.

In return for their financial contribution to the hub, member organisations will enjoy benefits, including access to resources. Also, the shift of contract management functions away from frontline providers towards a specialist contract management unit is expressly designed to create savings for those providers that are at least equal to the top-slice fee.

Quality and Quality Assurance

The health and social care services provided through the collaboration must be of consistently excellent or good quality to meet government and the procurement agencies aspirations for best value in the delivery of public services. Only appropriately quality-assured providers will be eligible to receive sub-contracts.

The collaboration will put in place and review a development plan to build on the Quality Assurance standards of providers including building on and co-ordinating member resources through activities like mentoring, sharing expertise etc. The collaboration will secure or allocate resources to help member organisations achieve Quality Assurance standards.

Prospective members must meet the eligibility criteria given below. Membership of the collaboration will not automatically qualify the organisation to receive a sub-contract.

Membership Eligibility Criteria

Sector

Prospective members must be a legally incorporated not-for-profit organisation with:

- Clear and transparent charitable objectives
- Clear social objectives

Governance

Prospective members must be well governed, including systems for recruiting, supporting and developing board members; board members must be aware of their roles and responsibilities and execute their duties efficiently and diligently.

Commitment to working with the vulnerable and disengaged

The collaboration has focus on providing mental health and social care services to the most vulnerable, marginalised and excluded individuals and communities. Prospective members must reflect this approach in their own day-to-day work.

Area of operation

Prospective members must be operating in primarily in Northamptonshire. The organisation must be able to demonstrate:

- A track record of providing services to residents in specific localities in the area
- A clear, robust system of accountability to service users or local communities
- A registered office within the area of operation

Commitment to consortium working

Prospective members must be willing to make a positive contribution to the collaboration. This includes:

- Consistently supporting the work of the MHNC even in areas and aspects that are not directly relevant to the work of the individual organisation
- Commitment to participating actively in the governance requirements, and adhering to the MHNC's code of practice, ways of working and protocol
- Commitment to sharing expertise, knowledge and experience with other members

Provision of mental health and social care services

Prospective members must be able to provide mental health services in Northamptonshire.

Members, as well as providing services themselves, must be committed to using or purchasing health and social care services, where appropriate, from micro organisations within the local community and to building the local supply chain.

Financial Health

Prospective member organisations must be in sound financial health, so that the consortium can be assured that its sub-contractors are financially sustainable and have appropriate financial management systems in place to manage sub-contracts effectively.

Quality Assurance

Prospective members must already operate with an externally recognised and validated Quality Assurance framework (e.g. Investors in People or ISO 9001:2000 or equivalent), or have a time-limited development plan to put a framework in place.

Organisational policies

Prospective members must the necessary policies and procedures (eg Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, etc) that it systematically implements and regularly reviews.

Technical capacity

Prospective members must have the technical capacity to hold, manage and deliver sub-contracts. Prospective members must be able to provide the hub with information relating to client numbers, case details, financial performance etc. Information must be provided on time and in a form that is complete, clear and accurate.

Joining and Membership Appointment Process

Application process

The MHNC has a formal application process. This ensures that organisations have fully investigated and committed to consortium membership and that they are able to meet procurement thresholds and requirements.

Categories of membership

The collaboration has two categories of membership:

- Full membership for organisations that meet all the eligibility criteria in full and are procurement ready
- Associate membership for organisations that meet eligibility criteria 1-6 in full and have some elements of eligibility criteria 7-10 in place.

New member verification panel

Applications are reviewed by an independent Member Verification Panel, which makes a formal decision whether to grant membership to applicants. The Member Verification Panel includes a cross-section of members of the board, together with external, independent representation.

The collaboration holds information events, training and surgeries for organisations that are considering applying for membership. Details are available on the website.

Further information

For further information about the MHNC and to obtain an Application form please contact The Chair, Mental Health Northants Collaboration, c/o Teamwork Trust, St Mark's Road, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN18 8AN.



Appendix 1

Current Membership Organisations

Brackley Mind

Brackley Health Centre
Halse Road
Brackley
NN13 6EJ

Corby Mind

18 Argyll Street
Corby
NN17 1RU

Daventry Contact

Units 1-2
South March
Long March Industrial Estate
Daventry
NN11 4PH

Daventry Mind

Brook Street
Daventry
NN11 4GG

Kettering Mind

49-51 Russell Street
Kettering
NN16 0EN

The Manna House

73 St Giles Street
Northampton
NN1 1JF

Northampton & District Mind

Regent Square
Northampton
NN1 2NQ

Oundle Rural Mind

1 Hern Park
East Road
Oundle
PE8 4BZ

Relate Northamptonshire

St Giles House
76 St Giles Street
Northampton
NN1 1JW

Rushden Mind

Phoenix House
Skinners Hill
Rushden
NN10 9YE

Spectrum Northants

Berrywood Road
Duston
Northampton
NN5 6XA

Teamwork

Unit 0
St Marks Road
Corby
NN18 8AN

Towcester Mind

Chantry House
Chantry Lane
Towcester
NN12 6YY

Wellingborough Mind

14 Havelock Street
Wellingborough
NN8 4QA

Appendix 2

Management Board

Chair

Karen Buckby

Vice Chair

Nigel Mansfield

Vice Chair

John Bruce

Company Secretary

John Bruce

Treasurer

John Nightingale