Department of Health & Social Care

Federated Data Platform Programme: accounting officer assessment

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It is normal practice for Accounting Officers to scrutinise significant policy proposals or plans to start or vary major projects, and then assess whether they measure up to the standards set out in Managing Public Money. From April 2017, the government has committed to make a summary of the key points from these assessments available to Parliament when an Accounting Officer has agreed an assessment of projects within the Government's Major Projects Portfolio.

Background and Context

NHS England is investing in a Federated Data Platform and Associated Services (FDP AS) to support health and care organisations to make the most of the information they hold and to work together to understand patterns, solve problems and plan services for their local populations. The FDP approach will enable the continued rapid spread of innovation by enabling local NHS Trusts, ICSs and innovators to build solutions on a platform that can facilitate sharing and scaling across the health and care system in a secure way, reducing duplication, and improving efficiency.

The FDP AS will provide trusts and ICSs with a set of core capabilities and nationally developed solutions. Initially, these solutions will focus on supporting five key NHS priorities (known as the 'five use cases'): Elective recovery, Vaccination and immunisation, Population health management, Care coordination and Supply Chain Management.

A number of pilots were implemented using the current data platform to test the capabilities and benefits.

Assessment against the Accounting Officer standards

Regularity

The proposal to invest in FDP AS has legal basis, Parliamentary authority, and Treasury authorisation; and is compatible with the agreed spending budgets. As part of the Government's mandate 22-23 to NHS England (Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 13A of the National Health Service Act 2006), FDP AS supports the delivery of four (of five) of the objectives set.

NHS England can procure FDP AS as contracting authority and for the benefit of additional contracting authorities under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and possesses relevant public law powers in section 2 and section 13YA of the NHS Act 2006

Both the OBC and FBC were developed in line with HMT Green Book standards and have been ratified by the appropriate NHS, DHSC, Cabinet Office and HMT approval channels.

Propriety

The FDP is a core service requirement for the NHS and will replace the current functionality of the Foundry platform which includes, but is not limited to, Covid-19 and flu vaccinations and PPE stock management. In addition, the IECCP and Optica pilots have been delivering significant benefits. Without the procurement of the FDP AS the ability to continue to roll out and scale these solutions could not be achieved.

The FBC has undergone robust governance checks, including with Cabinet Office and HMT, and as part of the GMPP the programme is subject to external Gate Reviews from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) who are providing independent assurance scrutiny and is reporting quarterly through the IPA GMPP data collection.

Value for Money

The procurement process was designed to deliver value for money for NHS England and the wider system, through a transparent and scalable pricing model. The objective of the procurement was to select the supplier that provides the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT).

As an indication of expected benefit, the FBC estimates that the FDP will realise benefit in the order of £780m over the 7-year appraisal period. This includes the potential for FDP to deliver the following:

- Cash releasing benefit in the order of £60m per annum within 5 years, and a total of £304.9m across the appraisal period.

- Non-cash releasing benefit in the order of £55m per annum within 5 years, and a total of £282.3m across the appraisal period.

- Societal benefit in the order of £38m per annum within 5 years, and a total of £189.6m across the appraisal period.

The OBC benefits model aggregated all benefits and profiled them against a single adoption profile for the Platform. This produced a strong benefits position but did not account for variability in uptake between different products. Development of our approach to roll-out has evolved and benefits can now be differentiated between National or Platform benefits, and product benefits. This changes the Benefit Cost Ratio, but the FBC retains a strong value for money argument. The FBC indicates a Benefit Cost Ratio of 4.92.

Feasibility

The programme can be implemented accurately, sustainably, and to the intended timetable.

There are no major feasibility or deliverability issues with regards to the FBC. The FDP AS programme underwent an IPA Gateway Review 3 in July 2023 with an 'amber rating'. The recommendations made as part of the review have been factored into the final stages of the procurement, implementation planning and programme management activities. A further Gateway 4 was held in March 2024 with another 'amber rating' and recommendation to proceed in advance of the FDP going live. Regular engagement with stakeholders across government will continue, as conditions associated with the FBC are delivered and closed.

In the FBC, the programme has outlined the Ways of Working which describe the operating model requirements of the Federated Data Platform and sets out the high-level responsibilities of the Successful Supplier. This includes proposed approaches to delivery, product management, and contract management. The programme team is finalising the implementation plan with the Successful Suppliers. The Contract incorporates strict mechanisms and controls for managing performance through a series of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The required contract management and governance structures are agreed.

Conclusion

As Accounting Officer, I am clear that the proposed approach is proper, regular, feasible and offers good value for money for the Exchequer. This summary sets out the key points which informed my approval decision.

As the responsible Accounting Officer for the Department for Health and Social Care I considered this assessment of Federated Data Platform and approved it on 29 May 2024.

The Assessment was first conducted in March 2023 at the point of Outline Business Case (OBC) approval and re-evaluated in August 2023 at the point which the Programme entered onto the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

Approval of the FBC was obtained in November 2023 and this assessment was further reviewed and updated in April 2024.

I have prepared this summary to set out the key points which informed my decision. If any of these factors change materially during the lifetime of this project, I undertake to prepare a revised summary, setting out my assessment of them.

This summary will be published on the government’s website (GOV.UK). Copies will be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons and sent to the PAC Chair, Comptroller and Auditor General and Treasury Officer of Accounts.

The delay in publication of this summary is a result of the timing which coincided with the pre-election period for the last General Election. Further delays were experienced due to structural changes at a senior level. The programme has since entered its delivery phase and anticipated benefits exceed the values set out at the point of the Accounting Officer Assessment being carried out

Shona Dunn

29 May 2024