1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Ian Moston (IM) welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the process for approving applications to those in attendance. IM confirmed that once all presentations had been made, non-members would be asked to leave the meeting so that the applications could be discussed in detail. Organisations could either wait outside or would be notified via email of the outcome of those discussions as soon as possible after the meeting.

ACTION: JAB/IM

The apologies were noted.

2. Notes of previous meeting held on 26th September 2014

The notes of the meeting were agreed as a true record.
3. Matters Arising

3.3 Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Level 2) – Mark Oldham

Mark Oldham had sent his apologies for the meeting so it was agreed by the group to defer this to the next meeting.

ACTION: JAB

3.4 NHS South Sefton & Southport & Formby CCG (Level 2)

Following receipt of the Assessors responses, the Group were happy to approve at Level 2 for the full 3 years.

4. Assessments

4.1 Greater Manchester CSU 12 month review

It was noted that this paper had been due to be presented at the September meeting but had to be put back due to the large number of applications to be heard.

A discussion took place regarding the Greater Manchester CSU Review document and it was felt that insufficient evidence had been provided to allow the accreditation to be extended to the full 3 years.

The group also concluded that as Greater Manchester CSU (were Level 2) and Cheshire & Merseyside CSU (not accredited) had now merged and been renamed to North West CSU, and also taking into account their accreditation status at the time of merger, North West CSU should be asked to reapply for accreditation at Level 1 initially.

ACTION: JAB

4.2 Lancashire CCGs – Level 1

Kirsty Hollis (KH) left the room while a discussion took place regarding the Lancashire CCG’s application. Jacky Bowman (JAB) advised that she had undertaken some pre-assessment work and felt that it was a very strong application that demonstrated excellent collaborative working across the 8 CCGs, which included a number of joint policies.

The following key areas of good practice were taken from the Assessor Report:

- Development of a clear mission statement for a federated approach to Towards Excellence accreditation - it is quite an achievement for all 8 organisations to consistently achieve the standard and to manage a federated approach to accreditation by all of the relevant accountancy bodies.
- The federated approach on this project has had a positive spin off in terms of wider collaborative working and networking for the team, this could be further developed in the future for example to second staff across organisations, provide shadowing opportunities and develop talent.
- Identification of a small “pooled” budget for FSD across the 8 organisations with consideration being given to expanding this in the future.
- Development of a shared logo for use on all emails and documentation giving the finance team a clear brand and identity.

KH was invited back in the room. IM advised KH that the group were happy to award at Level 1 accreditation on the understanding that the two incomplete sections would be evidenced within the next 3 months. IM also suggested that should the CCG’s wish to move to Level 2 that some consideration be given to having the help of a mentor to move forward to the next stage.

ACTION: JA/KH

4.3 Manchester CCGs – Level 1

The Manchester CCG’s application was discussed. There was a very positive culture within the Finance Department and the Level 1 criteria had been met in the portfolio of evidence that had been provided. The following key areas of good practice were taken from the assessor report:

Strong evidence of joint working. Examples included:

- Regular Heads of Finance meetings
- Month end finance position meetings chaired by CFO
- Away days which are quarterly, as a minimum and include staff development, feedback on courses etc.
- Training budget
- 1 FSD Lead (Kaye Abbott)
- 1 Deputy FSD Lead (John Pegington)

It was noted that, although Professional Body Employer Accreditation had been applied for and initial acknowledgement had been received, the organisation was still awaiting formal confirmation from ACA, CIMA and CIPFA.

At this point, Jacky mentioned that there were currently issues with the length of time the Professional Bodies were taking to provide formal confirmation, in particular CIMA and CIPFA.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that as the organisation had received approval in principle from ACA, CIMA and CIPFA, Level 1 be awarded but on the proviso that the outstanding certificates be evidenced within 3 months.

**ACTION: IH**

### 4.4 Trafford CCG – Level 1

Heledd Cooper (HC) advised that the application was of a high quality with all the information being made available on the day to fully support a Level 1 accreditation.

The following key areas of good practice were taken from the Assessor Report:-

- Staff are encouraged at every opportunity to consider appropriate training courses and internal opportunities to develop their skills or try new areas of work.
- The CFO is supportive on both secondments in and out of the organisation to ensure development and skills are achieved
- The finance team is highly involved in transformation and change within the CCG and is well placed to support and drive innovation.
- The generic SFIs have been replaced with locally devised Scheme of Reservation and Delegation to enable clearer understanding.

Following a discussion, it was agreed to award Level 1 accreditation.

**ACTION: JAB**

### 4.5 Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

Simon Worthington (SW), Ben Roberts, Grace Langton and Alison Tilley made a presentation to the Steering Group. The following key areas of good practice have been extracted from the assessor report:

Working Day-1 close-down – this is a significant achievement and has been maintained for 12 months since October 2013. The ambition for this was led by Simon Worthington, Director of Finance, and was a key objective to ensure early indicator to the organisation of financial pressures and ensuring accountability for financial control. This has enabled the finance function to proactively support wider directorates to be accountable for their budgets and further influence the quality improvement of financial information, supporting the transformation change in the organisation.

At the close of day-1 budget statements are shared with the organisation enabling budget holders/divisions to interrogate, understand and develop corrective actions in advance of the monthly Finance Committee and Board Meeting.

Team’s competence and training reviewed on a monthly basis and regular 1:1. Staff corporate and role specific training is monitored each month, as is performance against planned outcomes. A training skills matrix describes the requirements specific to each role in the department.

Countdown to Accreditation - as well as general FSD related bulletins etc the FSD notice board at entrance to department includes a ‘countdown to accreditation’ reflecting the % progress made in collating the evidence portfolio.

HFMA e-learning - Bolton FT have been identified by HFMA as the most consistent and biggest NHS user of e-learning modules and are currently top of the HFMA league table.

Towards Excellence Network Meeting – 11th December 2014
Following the presentation, a detailed discussion took place and it was agreed that all the criteria had been met for Level 1 and 2 and that the process was fully embedded within the organisation. However, the group requested further clarification around the following points:

a) Evidence of the endorsements from the Chief Executive and Monitor as mentioned during the presentation.
b) An explanation as to why the shadow assessor had been refused access to Bolton FT to participate in the process, as this did not fit with the values of Towards Excellence Accreditation.

It was agreed that JAB/IM would draft a letter to reflect the above points.  

**ACTION: JAB/IM**

### 4.6 NHS Liverpool CCG – Level 2

Phil Saha made a presentation to the Steering Group. The following key areas of good practice have been extracted from the assessor report:

Succession planning – the CCG is clearly making positive efforts to offer staff relevant secondment opportunities to widen their experience and to bring skills and knowledge back into the organisation e.g., in relation to specialised services.

Development of 2 Band 2 Finance Intern posts for a fixed term 1 year contract working collaboratively with LJM University, the CCG also has plans to develop a joint training post with the LA.

Staff are clearly encouraged to look outside of their own role and to develop wider skills and expertise e.g., in business case development.

The team is clearly embedded within the organisation and is well regarded and utilised.

Development of the “Show me the Money” programme – now being adopted by the wider organisation in key areas. Finance appears to be a leading light in the organisation in terms of staff development for example business case production and training in the pipeline around report writing for the wider organisation.

It was acknowledged that the presentation had been extremely good and that the organisation should be encouraged to move towards Level 3 over the coming months. Following a discussion, it was agreed to award Level 2 accreditation to the organisation.  

**ACTION: JAB**

### 4.7 NHS Wigan Borough CCG

Mike Tate (MT), Wayne Sanders, Sarah Marshall and Gayle Wells made a presentation to the Steering Group. The following key areas of good practice have been extracted from the assessor report:

Protected Learning Time was noted as an exemplar at the last assessment this area has continued to develop with a significant element of planning in developing the programme and feedback from staff & presenters.

Opportunities afforded to finance cadets. The CCG has extended arrangements with finance cadets into year 2 placements. A number of testimonials were submitted within the evidence portfolio.

Significant ongoing involvement with professional development across the NHS beyond the organisation can be demonstrated. Gayle Well’s involvement in Future Focus Finance and work done in her Value Maker Role.

Evidence that the workforce plan is being implemented within your organisation. Wigan Borough CCGs document ‘Our Commitment to Training and Development’ 2014/15 should be used as an example of best practice.

Evidence of organisational and professional leadership by senior finance team. Deputy CFO is the chair of the CCG wide Training group which provides a strategic direction for all training.
Following the presentation MT left the room while a discussion took place. The group acknowledged the enthusiasm of Wigan Borough CCG and the depth of engagement within the organisation and across the wider network. It was felt that they should take that strong leadership and see how they can help other organisations. It was acknowledged that this was a very strong Level 3 application.

MT was invited back into the room and IM advised that the group were more than happy to award at Level 3 and commended Mike and his team on the excellent application.

At this point, Jacky Bowman (JAB) commented that the level of engagement across the three organisations who had presented, was excellent.

ACTION: JAB

5. Timetable

The timetable was discussed and will be updated and distributed following the meeting.

ACTION: JAB

A discussion regarding Aintree University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust took place and Mike Burns (MB) agreed to speak to Dawn Gerrard about offering the support of the group.

ACTION: MB

6. Innovation Award

The 2014 Innovation Award process was discussed and the group agreed that the response had been excellent. IM suggested that organisations putting in for an Innovation Award in 2015 could also be encouraged to take the opportunity to apply for National Awards.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Update on review of Process & Guidance document, including Standards

JAB confirmed that at the first meeting, the Working Group had concentrated on reviewing the guidance and also Standard 6. The remaining Standards were due to be reviewed at the next meeting.

JAB mentioned that Julie Daines had suggested we considering having an accreditation logo for organisations to use as part of their email signature. The working group felt that this was an excellent idea so JAB had discussed this with the FSD National Communications Manager, who is going to come up with some design ideas for approval. JAB confirmed that she had also asked for ideas for an Innovation Award logo.

The group had been due to hold its next meeting straight after the Steering Group but as the meeting had over-run, it was agreed to re-arrange for January.

ACTION: JAB/CH

8. Dates of 2015 Meetings

6th March 2015
10th July 2015
2nd September 2015
11th December 2015