

Making integration a reality

The importance of involving adult social care providers in Integrated Care Systems

The new Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), which are now operational, created Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs), bringing together organisations to plan and deliver local care and health services to achieve these ambitions, with social care providers most likely to be involved with these partnerships.

ICPs are designed to bring together organisations from across health and care systems to develop a single plan that addresses the broader health, public health and social care needs of the local population. Opportunities are presented to care services by this plan, but as with previous attempts, integration will not happen if social care is not actively engaged and recognised for the innovation and solutions the sector can bring: the source of answers, not just problems. ICP plans should be built on the insights of adult social care providers offering frontline services and not just communicated to them later.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) guidance, '[Expected ways of working between integrated care partnership and adult social care providers](#)', was published in July 2022. It sets out expected ways of working between ICPs and adult social care providers. We welcome that adult social care providers are identified within the guidance as critical partners bringing “hugely valuable expertise in meeting current and future needs of their wider communities as well as deep insight and understanding of the people and communities they serve”. We need to be sure that enabling wide representation from social care providers, builds trust and stronger relationships using their perspectives and insights which are rooted in serving local communities.

The DHSC has asked Skills for Care to work with ICSs to offer practical support and insight, built on the most comprehensive picture and analysis of the adult social care workforce in England through the [Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset](#) (ASC-WDS).

ICPs should recognise the diverse nature of the adult social care provider landscape, take account of their competing priorities, differing capacities and resources to engage. They should not assume commissioners are adequate proxies for the provider voice and draw on networks, including registered managers. Services should be built around the person and their family and community; not just basic care needs, and we know that delivering genuinely personalised care and support does that best.

Our Skills for Care network of locality managers across the country are listening to care providers and others partners all the time. Adult social care needs to get involved in the integration agenda, but you may need support to do that, so if you have questions get in touch with your Skills for Care [locality manager](#).

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