

## Diversifying the Voice of Social Care Representation in North East London ICS

North East London ICS has expanded social care representation at the top levels of the ICS – where previously the only social care ‘voice’ was Skills for Care’s locality manager in their position on the Local Workforce Action Board and People Board.

Now, thanks to a push for greater representation of those delivering care across the region, a Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) representative from the eight local authorities is a member of the ICS People Board. This has been a hugely helpful channel for communication back into social care in each given area.

The DASS representative is joined on the ICS People Board by a representative from Care Providers Voice – a hugely proactive network set up by, and for, providers in the area. Together with Skills for Care and other social care partners across the region, conversations are underway to ensure ICS planning and initiatives are as inclusive, sustainable and representative as possible across the entire remit of North East London ICS.

### Identify and support existing commonalities

There is a degree of variation across North East London in the relationships local authorities hold with social care providers. They have found that typically those with more of their services contracted out to providers were more involved, while others had less established relationships with providers.

Three boroughs (Havering; Dagenham and Barking; and Redbridge) have particularly strong historical ties. In these boroughs there has generally been a greater degree of provider engagement than the other areas in the ICS. This has been in part thanks to the work of Care Providers Voice who, having originated in these three boroughs as care leaders themselves, now represent around 300 providers in their North East London-wide network.

Work is underway to gather insights on the many themes and issues which run consistently throughout the eight local authorities within the ICS area. To capture these, Skills for Care have worked together with partners across the remit of the ICS to establish a monthly meeting for local authority social care partners. This has welcomed an increasing degree of representation from commissioners across the region.


As part of this group’s work, each local authority has been encouraged to examine and share what their priority training needs are, to understand what scope there is for linking up work and projects across the ICS. By pulling together these themes and priorities, Skills for Care, Care Providers Voice and other partners aim to prevent work across the eight local authorities from becoming too fragmented or inconsistent. In turn, the ICS Board are able to use these shared insights to inform their plans and priority setting agendas.


For example, future plans for ICS governance and staffing were brought to the local authority social care workforce group by the Assistant Director of People, so that those directly involved in delivering social care in each local authority could feed into what was being planned.

## Recognise that there is no 'one voice' for adult social care

Care Providers Voice are hugely proactive in acting as a representative for social care providers across North East London, and securing a high level of engagement amongst this group. Their work began independently of the ICS (before its creation) but offers a great opportunity for the ICS to ensure their plans are informed by the people and organisations in social care that they will directly impact. The work has had a positive impact:

£ ✓ The three boroughs where Care Providers Voice are most active saw between 55 and 64% of all providers complete Fair Cost of Care exercises. This compares to between 25 and 41% in boroughs where they have not yet been as embedded.

 Redbridge Local Authority have now approached Care Providers Voice to run qualitative focus groups with providers in the borough to inform longer term Market Sustainability Planning.

 North East London ICS People Board have asked for Care Providers Voice's involvement in setting up a workshop involving social care providers from all eight boroughs to offer their feedback on the Workforce Strategy.

Coupled with a monthly meeting of the eight local authority Workforce Leads and commissioning representatives, this allows for an increased level of feedback from more people who are closely involved in the day-to-day operation of social care into ICS plans.

The increased involvement of numerous different social care 'voices' is a positive step, and Care Providers Voice network has been immensely proactive in representing the provider workforce. As a next step, the ICS is exploring the option of having service users represented via their local authority.

Seeking feedback on plans from providers (through Care Providers Voice) and local authority social care partners is an important step towards integration across North East London. It is promising that there is an understanding that people experience health and care services very differently across different organisations, roles, and settings – and that conversations are developing about capturing more of these experiences.

## Consider the practicalities of providers engaging with ICS work

After identifying limited engagement from social care, North East London established specific support for social care providers to access the health and care wellbeing hubs previously established across their remit with Greater London Authority (GLA) funding.

The North East London wellbeing hub, named Keeping Well, were able to recruit a dedicated social care manager using funds allocated by the ICS. Their role it is to proactively speak to social care organisations about the wellbeing offer.

A specific fund was also introduced where social care organisations could bid for support for wellbeing activities for their teams. Crucially, this can include support for backfill payments so that staff can attend workshops and training sessions while support is in place to cover for their time out of their day-to-day role. This has been identified as an important source of support to overcome a common barrier for social care provider staff and managers.

These programmes were established on the back of enhanced understanding as to why social care staff were engaging less than health staff with wellbeing initiatives, and – importantly – the ICS being receptive to the feedback sought by, and shared with, them.

### **Ensure fundamentals are understood across the system**

To aid integrated working, partners across North East London have carried out work to improve system-wide understanding of the function and make up of social care. A number of presentations have been given by Skills for Care, Care Providers Voice and other social care partners to the ICS People Board and its sub-groups, and other health forums, to underpin this. The Skills for Care's 'Understanding Social Care' programme has been particularly effective in highlighting the vast scale of the adult social care workforce in North East London.

As well as these induction level conversations, social care partners feeding into the work of ICS planning has resulted in positive conversations about ensuring social care inclusion in plans.

For example, social care partners raised with ICS leads that plans to email 'all health and care staff' across North East London are not viable due to the many different email systems between different social care employers and organisations (as opposed to 'NHS' standardised emails). Clarifying logistical matters such as this reduces the chance of social care partners not being included in joint initiatives or communication. Solutions are being sought by health and care partners in the ICS to enhance the ways plans are communicated across the health and social care workforce.

Taking the time to establish these fundamental and practical matters from the outset of planning has largely been positive. Where these conversations have been embedded over longer periods, NHS specialists in the ICS are beginning to ask organically 'how can we make sure this works for social care?'.

### **Think with an open mind about where engagement might happen**

To boost engagement from social care providers across North East London ICS, work is underway to map all the areas of each local authority with which a provider might have contact. For example, with employment, public health, and community support services. Identifying key people in these services means that they can be brought into developing discussions on future workforce planning.

The ICS capturing this detail is mutually beneficial. It supports a wider knowledge base of the full 'picture' of adult social care across the system, and it also enables joint solutions to be found to issues such as local unemployment. Some of its insights have concerned employment in the area:

- It has been identified that there is a huge crossover between the numbers of people across North East London who are not in meaningful employment, and vacancies which need to be filled across health and social care.
- As the ICS has identified, there are knock on effects in terms of the local economy, and wellbeing and public health factors, when people are not in meaningful employment.
- Priority work is therefore now underway to look at bringing these multiple strands together under one approach. This is being achieved by collating data which looks

not just at who currently works in health and care, but also those more broadly who can support capacity in the community.

**“The Care Providers Voice network is run by providers, for providers. This has shown us the power of ensuring that our offer to providers is relevant and represents what they will find most impactful.”**