

## Adapting plans and broadening the scope for engagement in Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire ICS have demonstrated good practice in their ongoing work to embrace the distinct insights of health and care partners and to identify opportunities to upskill the workforce. Their social care nursing placement programme has also proved very successful in establishing greater relationships between health and social care providers, and the wider community, throughout the region.

There is a growing representation of the voice of social care providers, and clear examples of efforts to expand this voice. This is in part thanks to the appointment of the local registered managers network chair on the ICS People Board. To ensure that integration does not rely on individual advocates or Board representatives, Northamptonshire ICS is now considering how to ensure processes are embedded in a systematic way at planning level. Their student nurse programme has been essential to this, and is actively changing people's perceptions, and increasing understanding, of social care across the region.

## Consider how wider institutions and organisations in the community can support integration

A Nurse Student Placement project has been established across Northamptonshire ICS in connection with the local university. This ICS-funded initiative has proved a mutually beneficial solution. It helps to solve the problem of NHS services facing issues with capacity to accommodate all the students, at the same time as social care services requiring greater nursing capacity. The programme has increased integrated working and will continue to do so as future nurses will have a greater understanding of the work of their adult social care colleagues. The Placement project also raises the profile of a career in social care to nurses, who may otherwise not have considered this option.

Northamptonshire ICS' People Board successfully leveraged Health Education England funding to create a specific post dedicated to expanding social care placements across the region. After identifying universities' lack of placements, in conjunction with the growing need to raise the profile of social care nursing, the ICS recruited a dedicated project lead to generate placements by liaising with universities and care home providers.

The new role engages directly with providers to understand where there is capacity and infrastructure to welcome trainee nurses into a care placement. It also works with the university and student nurses to arrange for them to undertake a section of their training. One registered manager has welcomed eight student nurses into her residential care home for their training through this programme.

This initiative has proved hugely successful in answering the needs of both health and social care providers within the region. Students involved in the programme explained how the care placement allowed them to understand the different varieties and service types associated with social care. They were confident that the experience transformed their perception of working in social care and would consequently consider a career in social care nursing where they would not have done before. The programme is now exploring opportunities to expand the offer to occupational therapy and physio placements.

## Clearly identify and communicate which meetings or spaces are relevant for social care

Feedback from across social care partners in Northamptonshire who have engaged with the activity of the ICS has been that meetings often remain very health-focused even where integration is encouraged on a broader thematic level. Advance indication of the topics that will be covered at forthcoming meetings is therefore crucial. It allows social care partners to identify where their involvement will be relevant and could lead to meaningful action (e.g. for discussions on staff recruitment and retention, specific project work, and direct social care funding discussions). Embedding processes for sharing meeting agendas with potential invitees is thus a valuable way of allowing social care providers to plan their time and resources effectively.

Moving towards more integrated agendas for meetings, where social care is inherently built into thematic work, is an ongoing process across ICSs generally. Northamptonshire ICS continue to be open to understanding more about how to progress this partnership working.

They give us a useful example to help demonstrate this. A recent generous gift of event tickets to say 'thank you' to health and care workers from the NHS Charity was ultimately only able to be extended to staff across the region who are employed by the NHS. The issue of parity of reward initiatives such as this was raised with the ICS following feedback from care workers. This sparked a number of important conversations across the system about the vastly different roles and makeup of social care organisations and how to ensure parity of esteem.

## Think practically about the different structures and processes of health and social care and make necessary adaptations from the outset of any initiative

ICS initiatives have enjoyed success when planning also accounts for the different staffing and funding models of health and care sector partners. In particular, social care providers often face difficulties in their capacity to engage with opportunities due to limited resource.

For example, Northamptonshire ICS recently introduced an innovative funded Equality, Diversity and Initiative reverse mentoring programme, which invited frontline health and care workers from under-represented backgrounds to act as mentors to ICS leaders. Whilst this initiative was widely welcomed across the ICS, social care provider involvement is so far ultimately relatively limited. This was due to the time constraints caused by under resourcing, and the lack of capacity to arrange funded cover for people taking part in the programme.

There has been an acknowledgement across Northamptonshire ICS that funding structures and contracting models will not always match like-for-like between health and social care partners. Rather than try to force these to align in every instance, Northamptonshire ICS recognise that making adaptations and thinking broadly about how to include social care engagement from the outset encourages greater diversity and integration.

The positive impact of adapting plans to enhance engagement is clear in Northamptonshire ICS's development of specialist dementia training. The ICS Education Subgroup allocated £20,000 to dedicated training in response to training needs analysis conducted with social care providers. The resultant training is now available to everyone across the social care system. Whilst the practical training around dementia awareness were popular among care professionals, the more academic components of the course were less in demand. As such,

the ICS are exploring follow-up support for social care staff to build their academic confidence and support them to maximise the full benefits of the available training.

### **Maintain social care specific spaces**

Northamptonshire have achieved a good level of engagement between health and social care partners in the ICS and integration is beginning to grow organically. However, social care partners have identified the importance of maintaining social care-specific spaces, too.

Social care specific spaces for providers, such as the ASC Workforce Group, are invaluable. They provide an accessible point of contact for providers to analyse updates across the ICS from a social care perspective and work out what wider system plans look like for them in practice. This platform is also a productive space from which to share experiences and ideas, and to feed into the wider system of work. As a clearly designated forum to discuss a broad range of social care issues, meetings of this nature also invite input from, and collaboration with, the local council who are typically less engaged elsewhere in the ICS. Whilst healthcare continues to dominate national discussions around wellbeing, social care providers welcome the opportunity to discuss how different local services interconnect, and what needs prioritising, from an explicitly social care point of view. This has proved to be a productive way of encouraging more providers to engage with ICS plans and delivery.

**“It’s really important to encourage specific providers to get involved in ICS plans and projects by promoting the benefits of doing so – it can be a chance for amazing professional and skills development.”**