# **CASE STUDY**

**Title:** North East London NHS and Healthwatch captures 90,000 comments from local people to strengthen local health and care planning.

**Case study summary:** North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Integrated Care System (ICS) partners have been working with eight local Healthwatch organisations to build on their established Community Insights System (CIS) which provides regular trends analysis and highlights residents’ experience of health and care services. Being able to access feedback and insight immediately is at the heart of its success and, importantly, is helping the system to understand the needs and aspirations of local people to help tackle health inequalities and improve health outcomes.

**Organisation:** North East London Integrated Care Board and System, Healthwatch Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets, Redbridge, Newham, Havering, Hackney, City of London and Barking and Dagenham.

**What was the aim:** To improve health and care services more quickly by collating, comparing and reporting on community experience of services and to do this by developing a pre-existing community insights tool to store and process feedback on patient care. This information is gathered by statutory and voluntary sector organisations and provides a rich learning opportunity for the ICS.

**What was the solution:** The Community Insights System started out as a tool used by a small number of local Healthwatch organisations to support their work. Recognising the benefits of capturing patient and resident insight, the ICS worked in partnership with Healthwatch to develop the tool to incorporate data on the wider determinants of health such as the physical environment, employment and economic factors. This enables broader pieces of analysis such as the factors affecting health inequalities.

The tool allows all types of feedback, qualitative and quantitative, to be captured. This makes it easier to identify themes across demographic groups, being able to see the bigger picture, and to understand common themes and identify where action is needed.

The system brings together information collected from diverse sources, such as in- person engagement, social media, official service visits and reports. It includes NHS Choices, Patient Opinion and Google Reviews; Healthwatch surveys and website feedback, hospital Patient Advice and Liaison Service complaints data, ‘thank you’ cards and compliments and voluntary and community sector projects and user feedback.

Partners have a data sharing agreement and are now bringing their qualitative insights into the CIS to be coded and made available across the system. Working with the local Healthwatch allows the ICS to benefit from a wide pool of volunteers that represent a range of local communities, able to reach into grass roots communities who would not otherwise have their voices heard.

This collaborative working is funded by the ICB and enables Healthwatch to gather, enter, and code the insights and produce the reports. Additional work is commissioned on a project-by-project basis in agreement with a joint Steering Group, that includes representatives from each Healthwatch and the ICB, which meets fortnightly to review the insight, set priorities and manage projects.

**What were the results:** The Community Insights System currently holds approximately 90,000 comments from local residents that equates to over 300,000 separately coded issues.

A huge benefit is being able to access and use insight from people to strategically target further engagement where it’s needed, to understand issues in more depth and to coordinate this across the system to avoid asking people ‘more than once’ which has helped develop an understanding of local communities and built trust.

Insights on equity and equality of maternity services led to work to establish a 24/7 maternity helpline, clearer service information and signposting to support such as children’s centres and baby banks, training for staff on trauma and cultural understanding to better support different communities.

Insights on demand for same day appointments by different patient cohorts is supporting improvements in primary care access and outcomes.

Insights on inequalities has allowed the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to focus on customising communications to meet the needs of particular ethnic and disability groups, leading to better rates of uptake of immunisation and screening programmes.

The tool allows stakeholders to produce and circulate a range of regular quarterly reports and summary dashboards at north east London and Place Based Partnership level. They show positive and negative change over time across a range of patient experience measures in relation to integrated care, GPs and hospitals, as well as priority areas such as long-term conditions and mental health. See report examples here https://www.northeastlondonhcp.nhs.uk/Insight/healthwatch-and-community-insights.htm

The reports and insights allow the ICS:

* to identify where residents are experiencing poor service and to get an initial understanding of why.
* to pinpoint where additional engagement is needed to understand more about the nature of the problem and who it is impacting the most.
* to continuously build their understanding of the communities they serve, the intersectionality of equalities issues and to avoid asking the same questions in different settings
* to use limited engagement resources to focus on the areas that will have the greatest impact.
* to inform quality improvement and co-production, design, and delivery programmes.
* to support community leaders to take on representative roles across governance systems by supporting them with evidenced based insight reports that enable them to speak more authoritatively on behalf of a wider base of patients and residents.

Dianne Barham, Healthwatch Waltham Forest, said, ‘Bringing together existing insights from across the system and coding them across the integrated care system allows local people to tell their story once and for it to have an impact. It allows us to focus our limited resources on reaching out to those people who are most vulnerable or seldom heard and on using insights to genuinely co-produce services with local people’.

Charlotte Pomery, Chief Participation and Place Officer for North East London ICB said, ‘The community insights are used in all parts of the ICS system and underpin the creation and delivery of our Integrated Care Strategy and our ability to hear local voices. The work has brought partners together from across North East London, allowing us to access a wide range of views from local people quickly that we can then use as the foundation to plan and further improve services with a range of stakeholders. Gathering volumes of feedback is one thing, but insight is so much more meaningful when it’s coded and managed carefully. Working closely with Healthwatch to do this has been a great success’.

**What were the learning points:**

Working in partnership with Healthwatch has been pivotal to the development and success of the Community Insights System. Their expertise, advice and links to the local community are of huge value to the ICS.

Trying to secure the additional funds and outline the case for joining up insights across the system was initially quite a challenge as it was deemed too expensive, but the benefits it is delivering have proved a worthwhile investment to strengthen health and care outcomes in our local population. In fact, it has been such a fundamental part of our strategy development and way of working that for 2023/24 we are further investing in an enhanced insight offer from the system through our eight Healthwatch organisations.

This just shows how partnership working with Healthwatch and the VCSE sector, a cornerstone of Integrated Care Systems, can really help improve services for local people.