healthwatch
Camden Barnet Enfield Haringey Islington

North Central London (NCL) Healthwatch Boards' statement on principles of engagement with Sustainability and Transformation Plan and Board

As local Healthwatch we champion a transparent dialogue around decision-making within health and social care in our local areas. We know services will be changing. We therefore urge STP leaders to ensure meaningful consultation and engagement, with information on how due regard is being given to the Public Sector Equality Duty, is embedded within the planning process so that residents can give an informed opinion.

Clarity of the STP Governance arrangements

- As services are being redesigned around service users there needs to be clarity around any new governance arrangements so service users and members of the public know where decisions are made and how and when decisions can be influenced.
- The governance arrangements must align with the principles of the NHS Constitution and in particular that "patients should be at the heart of everything the NHS does" and "the NHS is accountable to the public, communities and patients that it services".

Impact of the STP on service users

- The STP is such a wide ranging document there is a danger that unless our comments are focussed on specific issues of significance to service users our impact will be diluted.
- In light of the above we should focus on the impact of the STP proposals on reducing the health inequality gap. This will capture issues relating to early intervention, prevention, community assets and wider determinants of health.

Parameters for engagement should be clear

- Engagement questions should focus on areas that can be influenced. If there is no opportunity for influence this should be clearly stated.
- We urge partners to follow the 'ladder of involvement' and to be clear whether they aim is to 'inform' the local community, to 'engage' with them in open discussions and to 'co-design/ co-produce' services with them.

Engagement should be inclusive

- Information should set out clearly what the impact of changes will be and should be clearly and succinctly communicated in Plain English (and made available in other formats as requested, for example through the use of interpreters or Easy Read material),
- Events and meetings should be held in accessible locations (accessible to people with disabilities and easily reached on public transport, with adaptations made for attendees' communication needs) and at various times to allow for maximum attendance,
- Outputs from meetings held in public should be in the public domain (this includes revisions to the Sustainability and Transformation Plan that follow on from that meeting),
- Each engagement activity should plan for the engagement of people from a range of backgrounds, levels of knowledge about the system and from across the nine protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. **Particular attention should be paid to bringing in the views of those disadvantaged by health inequalities.**

Influence of engagement activity should be demonstrable

- The Sustainability and Transformation Board needs to have a clear mechanism for ensuring that views and ideas captured from engagement activity are raised and responded to at Board level.
- The Board should be clear where engagement activity has influenced it's planning and where it has not been able to respond to suggestions and ideas raised it should be transparent about why not.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF NCL HEALTHWATCH CHAIRS