

Engagement Assurance Committee Cover sheet

Title	Draft engagement annual report					
Meeting date	25 March 2026	Agenda item Number	F	Paper Enclosure Ref	7	
Author	Rosemary Watts, Assistant Director of Engagement					
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Paper is for:	Assurance		Decision		Information	X
Purpose of paper	<p>The purpose of the paper is to share the draft engagement annual report for discussion and comment prior to it being published as stand alone document on the ICB website. The ICB annual report will be a shorter document this year and will, therefore include a summary engagement report which is reproduced below and link to the main document which is attached as enclosure Fi.</p> <p>As part of the assurance process for engagement, NHS England look at published information including the annual report.</p>					
Summary of main points	The report outlines key engagement activity which took place from April 2025 – March 2026					
Potential conflicts of Interest	None					
Sharing and confidentiality	Is available for sharing					
Relevant to these boroughs	Bexley	X	Bromley	X	Greenwich	X
	Lambeth	X	Lewisham	X	Southwark	X
Equalities Impact	The report outlines work that has been done to reach people from across diverse communities in south east London.					
Financial Impact	None					
Public Patient Engagement	The report details engagement work that has been carried out in the last year.					
Committee engagement	Engagement Assurance Committee					
Recommendation	The committee is asked to read the report and provide any comments before publication					



Summary for Annual report: Engagement with People and Communities

Overview

Engagement with people and communities remains a core priority for the South East London Integrated Care System (ICS). Over the past year, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) has continued to strengthen its approach to listening, co-production and partnership working, ensuring that patient and public voices meaningfully influence strategy, service design and commissioning decisions. This work reflects the ICB's commitment to reducing health inequalities, sharing power, and embedding lived experience at every level of decision-making.

Governance, leadership and assurance

Engagement activity is supported through strong governance arrangements. The Engagement Assurance Committee (EAC) continues to provide independent scrutiny and leadership on engagement, with public members forming the majority of the committee. Senior board-level representation ensures engagement is embedded within organisational decision-making.

During the year, the committee provided assurance on a wide range of strategic engagement activity, including equalities deep dives, evaluations of engagement pilots, programme-specific engagement (such as creative health and pre-conception care), service re-procurements, and the development of the annual engagement workplan. Regular reporting from Healthwatch and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Alliance further strengthened system-wide accountability and insight.

[Read more here.](#)

Partnership with the VCSE sector

Partnership with the VCSE sector remained central to engagement activity. Through the VCSE Alliance, senior VCSE leaders are embedded within strategic decision-making spaces across NHS trusts, supporting a more community-led approach to system transformation. Collaborative programmes include the Trust and Health Creation Partnership, particularly in communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities, help ensure that engagement activity translated into practical action and service change.

[Read more here.](#)

Creative health programme

A major focus during the year was the development of the South East London Creative Health programme. Extensive engagement was undertaken to understand how creative activities support health and wellbeing and how creative approaches can contribute to reducing health inequalities.

Over 300 residents shared their views through a range of methods, including surveys, online discussions, community outreach and co-production opportunities. Engagement took place



across all six boroughs and deliberately focused on reaching underserved communities. Insight gathered highlighted the positive impact of creative activity on mental wellbeing, social connection and stress reduction, while also identifying barriers such as affordability, caring responsibilities and access to information.

Findings from this work are informing future partnership approaches with local authorities, the voluntary and creative sectors, and regional partners to test new, less traditional models of prevention and wellbeing support.

[Read more here.](#)

Reducing health inequalities

The ICB continues its partnership with Impact on Urban Health to address Black maternal health and Black mental health inequalities. Expert Reference Groups made up of people with lived experience, VCSE leaders, clinicians and commissioners guide the work. A solutions-focused approach led to the development of community-led funding opportunities, supported by lived experience consultants involved in assessment and decision-making. In the Black maternal health project and this process is being replicated in the Black mental health project.

[Read about the Black maternal health project here.](#)

[Read about the Black mental health project here](#)

Service re-design and re-procurement

Engagement activity played a key role in shaping several service re-design and procurement processes.

- **Community Ear Wax Removal Service:** Engagement with people with lived experience, carers and community members is informing the re-procurement of services across south east London. Insight via a survey and focus groups highlighted the importance of home visits, care-home provision, clear referral routes, self-care advice and improved communication. Lived experience representatives have been recruited to the steering group to support the procurement process.

[Read more here.](#)

- **Community Wheelchair Services:** More than 200 people with lived experience and carers contributed insight to a review of wheelchair services in Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich through surveys and focus groups. While clinical expertise was valued, people highlighted issues around waiting times, communication and repairs. This feedback is directly shaping future service specifications.

[Read more here.](#)



- **Coordinated community-based as alternatives to hospital admissions:** Insight gained through a survey and focus groups about hospital at home services and urgent community response services is informing the development of a single point of access / integrated care co-ordination hub and contributing to service improvement. Participants highlighted the value of care delivered at home alongside opportunities to improve communication and coordination.

[Read more here.](#)

Condition specific engagement

Targeted engagement supported improvements in services for people with specific health needs:

- **Sickle cell services:** Ongoing patient, user or carer feedback continues to inform the development and improvement of the enhanced multidisciplinary community care service which includes access to a range of therapists, welfare advice, peer mentoring and education resources. Patients helped to plan the community picnic which was an opportunity to raise awareness and share information about sickle cell, helping people to feel more informed and which helped to strengthen networks and build trust.

[Read more here.](#)

- **New service for autistic adults:** Engagement with the autistic community helped South East London ICB to better understand the challenges people experience that may result in unnecessary and inappropriate admission to hospital. Surveys and focus groups identified gaps in support services for autistic people who do not have a learning disability or a diagnosed mental health condition. The ICB worked with partners and people with lived experience to design a community autism service due to start in March 2026 to provide multidisciplinary, person-centred support to autistic adults whose needs are not able to be met by existing services.

[Read more here.](#)

Improving pre-conception care

In partnership with the South East London Local Maternity and Neonatal System, engagement was undertaken to improve understanding and access to pre-conception care. Outreach activities reached people across all six boroughs, including young adults, men students and parents.

Insight showed low awareness of pre-conception health, particularly among young people and men, alongside reliance on informal information sources and online content. Emotional, cultural and practical barriers were also identified. This work informed a targeted public health campaign delivered with [Tommy's the pregnancy and baby charity](#) in 2025, resulting in increased engagement with digital planning tools and improved reach among communities experiencing



higher levels of deprivation. We launched a follow up campaign, [Plan For Baby](#), in early 2026 which focuses on access to local services.

[Read more here.](#)

Engagement at place and in the development of integrated neighbourhood services

Across boroughs, a range of engagement activity has taken place ranging from discussions in public forums, outreach to communities to support relationships and developing trust to shaping integrated neighbourhood health models, particularly for people with long-term conditions. A range of engagement methods across the six boroughs of south east London ensured that feedback directly informed service models, patient information and next steps. You can read more about local engagement by following the links below:

- [Bexley Wellbeing Partnership](#)
- [One Bromley](#)
- [Healthier Greenwich Partnership](#)
- [Lambeth Together](#)
- [Lewisham Health and Care Partnership](#)
- [Partnership Southwark](#)

[A neighbourhood health service in south east London - South East London ICS](#)

Engagement infrastructure and capacity building

The ICB continued to invest in engagement infrastructure, including the online engagement platform, which saw strong levels of participation and informed engagement. The engagement team supported system learning through the engagement Practitioners' network and community champions co-ordinators network, helping to share insight, align activity and reduce engagement fatigue.

New resources, including a guide to community organising and an expanded insight library, were developed to support colleagues and partners in delivering meaningful, inclusive engagement.

Conclusion

Across 2025–26, engagement activity across south east London demonstrated a clear shift towards deeper partnership and working with people with lived experience. Insight gathered from communities is directly influencing service design, commissioning and system priorities, supporting the ICB's ambition to create more equitable, responsive and person-centred health and care services.

There is further detail about our engagement work in our engagement report 2025 /26 which you can read here. [\[add link when published at end of March\]](#).

