

Hackney Healthwatch: CCG mergers July 2019

<http://www.healthwatchhackney.co.uk/news/are-city-and-hackneys-days-numbered/>

Are City and Hackney's days numbered?

Speculation is mounting that City and Hackney's high performing clinical commissioning group (CCG) may cease to exist in its current form within two years.

According to recent reports in the *Health Service Journal*, a decision on the future of north east London's seven CCGs, including City and Hackney, is due in the autumn.

The *Health Service Journal* reports that almost half of England's 191 English CCG are in talks about mergers by April 2020 and that London is 'seeking to merge its 32 CCGs into five by April 2020'.

To date, there has been no local public discussion or formal public consultation on plans to merge City and Hackney with its six north east London neighbours**.

Under any merger with neighbouring CCGs, the distinct legal duty to City and Hackney residents would end, potentially weakening local accountability and shifting away from local decision-making in health services.

City and Hackney outperforms most other CCGs in the country and has just achieved 'outstanding' against NHS England's 2018-19 improvement and assessment framework.

Healthwatch Hackney executive director Jon Williams said City and Hackney had consistently championed public involvement in shaping health and promoted transparency and accountability. He said this had 'contributed significantly' to the quality and effectiveness of local services.

'It is vital public involvement, local accountability and transparency are not lost with creation of any super-CCG for north east London. We want to see open conversation with City and Hackney residents about how NHS services will continue to be accountable and responsive to residents,' he added.

[City and Hackney CCG](#) was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 with clear legal duties to plan and commission healthcare for City and Hackney residents.

Currently, our CCG is a legally distinct NHS organisation operating within the [East London Health & Care Partnership integrated commissioning system](#) and retains legal responsibilities for local City and Hackney residents.

Last year City and Hackney, along with six other north east London CCGs, appointed Jane Milligan as 'single accountable officer' to oversee the emerging north east London integrated commissioning system (ICS).

Important healthcare commissioning decisions affecting City and Hackney residents are already being made by the [north east London joint commissioning committee](#).

However, City and Hackney says it 'continues to decide how the vast majority of services are commissioned'.

We asked City and Hackney CCG and the EHCP to confirm if merger talks were taking place and what public consultation was planned.

In [a detailed response](#), the CCG describes benefits to patients and residents of current joint commissioning arrangements with neighbouring north east London boroughs. It also points to the new 'Neighbourhoods Model', based on GP clusters, as a vehicle for ensuring services are focused on City and Hackney residents.

'Our local vision is an integrated health and care system where local residents and patients have the healthiest, happiest lives possible. We want to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in our boroughs, by planning and delivering health, social care and public health services together,' it said.

In response to our specific question on whether the public would be *consulted* on any merger plans, the CCG said: 'As with all our work, we will be publishing papers and documents in relation to any future change in structure on our website and will be completing extensive engagement with partners, especially residents and patients.'

Our seven questions and City and Hackney CCG's detailed response can be read [in full here](#).

An ELHCP spokeswoman also directed us to a chapter in the NHS Long Term Plan entitled: 'A new service model for the 21st century' which states: 'Every ICS (Integrated Commissioning System) will need streamlined commissioning arrangements to enable a single set of commissioning decisions at system level. This will typically involve a single CCG for each ICS area. CCGs will become leaner, more strategic organisations that support providers to partner with local government and other community organisations on population health, service redesign and Long Term Plan implementation.'

***North east London CCGs are: City and Hackney, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest. All seven CCGs are working as part of the East London Health and Care Partnership (EHCP) a (non-statutory) partnership which comprises local councils and healthcare providers including Homerton Hospital, Barts NHS Trust and East London Foundation Trust.*

We (Healthwatch) asked City and Hackney CCG the following questions about potential merger. Our questions and the CCG's response are below:

1. How likely is it that City and Hackney will merge with neighbouring (NEL) CCGs in the next 2-3 years?
2. Is this being discussed with ELHCP and neighbouring CCGs at the moment? Are there any papers in the public domain where this is mentioned?
3. What legal process do you have to go through to merge with other CCGs?
4. Would such a decision require: a) local public consultation? b) Consultation with the local Health Scrutiny commission?
5. How would such a merger benefit local residents?
6. At what point would the local public be advised of any merger plans?
7. What proportion of commissioning for City and Hackney residents is now done by the NEL Joint Commissioning Committee

City and Hackney CCG's response to Healthwatch Hackney's questions

In 2017/18, the seven north east London (NEL) CCGs - City and Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge – came together to create the NHS North East London Commissioning Alliance (NELCA). NHS City and Hackney CCG continues to decide how the vast majority of local NHS services are commissioned and remains legally accountable for the delivery of their responsibilities, however, where it makes sense, and is in the best interest of patients, the seven CCGs work together (i.e. delivering

commissioning efficiencies and developing an aligned approach to working with providers to ensure long-term sustainability and support in the delivery of effective integrated care systems).

In addition to this, and as part of the nationally led move to Integrated Care Systems (ICS) across the NHS (to support achieving the Long Term Plan), partners from City of London and Hackney including Hackney Council, the City of London Corporation, City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group, the Homerton, East London Foundation Trust, the GP Confederation and the voluntary sector are changing how they work together to improve health and care services. Organisations joining up to share their staff, money, expertise and services is called 'Integrated Commissioning and Care', and the process formally began in City and Hackney in 2017.

Our local vision is an integrated health and care system where local residents and patients have the healthiest, happiest lives possible. We want to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in our boroughs, by planning and delivering health, social care and public health services together. We want to ensure our service users are at the centre of everything we do, with local services joined-up and streamlined around them. Integrating what we do will enable us to design and transform services according to patients' needs not organisational boundaries.

A focus for 'Integrated Commissioning and Care', has involved GP practices joining up with residents, local hospitals, community groups, mental health providers, social care, and voluntary sector organisations to create eight 'Neighbourhood' areas. Each Neighbourhood includes four to seven GP practices who will work as part of a team of local services to coordinate health and social care in the community to help improve the lives of around 30,000 – 50,000 residents who live in that neighbourhood area.

By working together better and more locally, we can make the most of our joint local knowledge and achieve our common goals. A model with a City focus and a Hackney focus means we can better tailor services to the needs of our diverse communities. We can also make the most of every City and Hackney pound in the context of increasing pressure on sector budgets. Central to this vision is our commitment to involve residents, patients, providers and our staff as equal partners at every step along this journey. We want to create people-focused services by listening more to residents' and patients' voices.

As with all our work, we will be publishing papers and documents in relation to any future change in structure on our website and will be completing extensive engagement with partners, especially residents and patients.

* City and Hackney CCG Annual Report 2017/18 can be found here:
http://www.cityandhackneyccg.nhs.uk/Downloads/About%20Us/Plans%20Strategies%20and%20Forms/FINAL%20published%20CCG%20Annual%20Report%2017_18.pdf * More information on the NHS North East London Commissioning Alliance can be found here:
<http://www.cityandhackneyccg.nhs.uk/about-us/north-east-london-commissioningalliance.htm>