

Strong Community Involvement¹

Empowering people to become genuinely involved, able to influence commissioners and providers, and to become central to strengthening the legitimacy of our local institutions

What are the challenges?

- Distrust in institutions:
 - They don't listen and are far away from me
 - Nothing changes for the good, it just gets worse
 - They aren't interested in me
- Funding: Austerity continues and will likely intensify
- The world we live in:
 - How is the pandemic re-shaping us – do we have the words and insight to understand this yet?
 - Climate emergency is bringing increasing systematic shocks
 - In the 70s UK rated second in Europe in terms of equality, now at the bottom
[\(\[Income inequality in the UK: Comparisons with five large Western European countries and the USA \\(dannydorling.org\\)\]\(https://www.dannydorling.org/inequality-uk-comparisons\)\)](https://www.dannydorling.org/inequality-uk-comparisons)

What might strong community involvement and influence look like?

- Continuous and cumulative processes enabling relationships of trust to build over time
- Honesty about the challenges – stop believing managing expectations works
- Sharing-power:
 - Enabling those without power to gain power
 - Those with power to ensure their approach is open, accountable, transparent and focused on effective collaboration with those who have little or no power
- Working together (coproduction) fully implemented with resident oversight – sharing power.

What should people expect from us?

- Healthwatch Hackney and the Volunteer Centre Hackney are working together to develop Community Development standards*
- We are doing this as there is a lot of change happening to health and care services in Hackney.
- We recognise services aim to be closer to residents, but we need to evidence how we are influenced by their needs and demands
- We must make sure residents can influence change, and make sure that services demonstrate they are listening to and meeting people's needs

**These were developed to support involvement in the Neighbourhood Programme*

The Common Standards – what you should expect

1. Working together

To ensure that residents and Neighbourhoods Teams* are equal partners, this work will follow the commitments of the [City and Hackney Co-production Charter](#). This Charter aims to make sure residents are not just asked about changes but are involved in the decisions about what changes will be made. Resident-led community projects and ideas need to be promoted and celebrated as part of the contribution residents make.

2. Social Model

People must not to be seen as “conditions” or being “vulnerable”. They are also social beings with wider interests, e.g. where they live, the conditions they live in, their access to education and jobs. They should be listened to and their views and feelings taken into account regarding their needs and their proposed solutions. Language, and honest communication about how information is shared, should be appropriate and easy to access and understand at all times.

** can be widened out to all services*

- **3. Diversity and inclusion**

We are a proudly diverse borough. Residents come with many differences, many ethnicities, religions and cultures and this must be celebrated. We must take all possible, active and relevant steps to support their meaningful inclusion and participation in local developments and service improvements. This must take account of issues like social status, educational background, living environment, skills, capacity and time. It is important that everyone is given the opportunity and support to be involved at all levels. Attention should be paid to those who are under-represented; and learning gathered from the ground up.

- **4. Community action and empowerment through local resident skills and abilities**

Residents must be enabled to help local services understand the values and aspirations of local people. Residents' knowledge and experiences must be valued and taken into account by those making key decisions about local policies, issues and services.

Residents must be supported to explore and develop how best to use their personal and collective knowledge, skills and connections when working with health and care professionals. Real resident involvement helps professionals operate more effectively to address the needs of local communities.

- **5. Tackling inequality**

Residents must be empowered to question, challenge and suggest their own solutions to the issues affecting their health and living circumstances in their community. These could include housing, providing culturally sensitive health services, access to education and employment and the environment. Residents are likely to appreciate more fully the needs of communities they are part of.

Suggested Model (*this will need funding*)

- Two-pronged approach (1) People led & (2) VSCE led
- People led*
 - Healthwatch Hackney (HWH)/Volunteer Centre Hackney (VCH) lead agencies
 - Use their established people groups to reach into the communities:
 - HWH - Board/Public Representatives/Neighbourhood Resident Involvement Group/NHS Community Voice Steering Group/volunteers
 - VCH – Our Place/Together Better (GP Volunteering)/Community Champions (a disappearing resource?)
 - Explore with residents Health and Well-Being priorities, and articulate resident led ideas and solutions back to the HWBB for action
 - Feedback to residents on progress/action on their proposed solutions and get their assessment, e.g. if they felt empowered or disempowered by this experience – feedback to HWBB
 - Review at HWBB to assess how involvement and influence can be improved and evolve

*NB: Other local people-led groups include HiP - Hackney Independent Parent's, and City and Hackney Older People's Reference Group

VSCE led

- A number of VSCE organisations are on-going sources of information about residents' experiences of local services
- We need to identify criteria to select a diverse range of these organisations and ask them to set up focus groups (or another inclusive model)
- These focus groups will explore and develop Health and Well-Being priorities and articulate their proposals and solutions to the Board
- Feedback to groups is essential to demonstrate progress/action on their solutions, and get their assessment if they felt empowered or disempowered by this experience – feedback to Board
- Review at Board to assess how involvement can be improved and evolve further to increase the empowerment of local people

What do we have in place to help us?

- Co-production Charter and the Public Representatives
- Voluntary and Community Enterprise Sector (but under financial pressure)
- VSCE Assembly
- Established working relationships across the Council, Health, VSCE, Trade Unions
- Integrated Care System and its anchor framework
- People and Place Group
- Neighbourhood Programme/Primary Care Networks
- Tenant Management Organisations
- Faith Groups
- Volunteer Centre Hackney – people programmes
- Healthwatch Hackney – people programmes

Questions

- Do you support this model?
- What do you think of the Common Standards?
- What resources can we obtain to support this approach to local empowerment?
- What are the potential risks of this approach?