

Background

It's important to acknowledge that integrated care systems (ICSs) are at various stages of development. What unites all ICSs is the need for individuals from different organisations to work collaboratively to create a culture where integration can thrive. We have been engaging with partners across health and social care to learn what is most important in attaining a positive culture, how we can bring it to fruition, and how we can benefit from hearing and working with the diverse roles across our sector. Our six ways were drawn from systems currently planning and developing integrated working and collated by NHS Employers, Skills for Care (SfC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).



In October 2022, we published the guide [Integrated workforce thinking across systems](#) which offers tips and insights to help system leaders start thinking about integrated working. Since the publication of the guide, we have received feedback from members that building the right culture and creating strong relationships can sometimes be difficult to achieve but presents new opportunities if done well. That is why we have created a resource to prompt thinking and provide the tools we feel are needed to create a better culture that supports collective and collaborative action, working beyond traditional teams and organisation boundaries.

We extended our engagement and collaborated with more partners to [explore the impact that peak demand has on people and partnerships](#), with colleagues from a wide range of organisations/sectors including, community health, acute, primary care, mental health, system organisation development leads, integrated care boards (ICBs), NHS wellbeing leads, residential

care, domiciliary care, voluntary sector and the learning disability sector. This collaboration allowed us to bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the table. The quotes detailed throughout the six ways are pulled from our two round table discussions where we discussed how peak demand impacts both the people and partnerships.

In the 2023 Hewitt review into integrated care systems, an independent review of integrated care systems, Hewitt stated that: 'ICSs represent the best opportunity in a generation for a transformation in our health and social care system. Effective change will require the combination of new structures with changed cultures. Everyone needs to change, and everyone needs to play their part. It is important to create the right culture for integration and encourage health and social care to work together. An integrated approach to health and social care provides people in communities with a better quality of life, rather than a service.'

ICSs are partnerships of organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services to improve the lives of those who work and live in their community. Included in ICSs are the integrated care partnership (ICP), ICB, local authorities and place-based partnerships that design and deliver integrated services across their localities or neighbourhoods.

Collaboration is not enough, organisations and the people within them are the system and they need to invest time in building meaningful relationships across different teams and organisational boundaries. Genuine partnerships and collaborative working with shared outcomes can help build a culture that truly improves the quality of life for people who draw on care and support.

"Ensuring we have strong relationships is where we focus our energy, so we know that when things get tough, we can work together effectively."- ICB CPO network member.

Achieving a culture that improves integration and builds trust in the complexity of the health and social care system can be challenging. This resource shares tips on how ICSs and the people who work within them can begin to work towards this goal.