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Reducing health inequalities through enhanced local community engagement

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Learning what your community needs

Health inequalities are defined by the National Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Programme (HiQiP) as "unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population and between different groups between society." Those inequalities, many of which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, arise from a range of factors, including:

- Age and financial status

- The conditions in which people live and work

- Provision of inappropriate health and care services to the local population

- Unequal access to health and care services

- Variations in experiences and outcomes.

HiQiP sets out a positive improvement culture which uses robust data to target action for reducing and preventing healthcare inequalities.

So how can Foundation Trusts and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) gather and analyse the data they need to help them tackle those inequalities?

Critical first steps are to engage with the local community and understand the local demographics. What's the makeup of your local population? What's their experience of the health and care services currently provided? What service changes or improvements would make a positive difference to their lives and health?

Answering these and other related questions depends on regular interaction with a representative sample of the local population. Foundation Trusts do this via their memberships, and ICBs via their citizen panels.

You need to ask your members about their needs and experiences, gather and analyse the resulting data, and combine it with data from other sources. This will help you assess the local community's evolving requirements and adjust services accordingly to reduce and prevent health inequalities.

A better way to engage and collect data

If you're using spreadsheets to manage your thousands of members, you're doubtless finding it complex and time consuming. On top of that, your ability to communicate with members, run surveys, gather data, and analyse and report on that data, is likely to be limited.

When you want to share outcomes and plans with your members — or simply invite them to AGMs and other events — you probably find it takes a lot of manual intervention. And no matter how much care you take, there's always the risk of human error creeping in.

Many ICBs will have the additional challenge of merging memberships from their component Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), as they remap constituencies and look to understand data in the context of a new, larger constituency.

Centralise engagement and analysis in a single platform

Engagement with your community becomes easier and more effective when you use a specifically designed platform or hub solution that combines membership management and engagement with data capture and analysis.

The platform you select should allow you to gain control over your membership data, as well as streamline communications with your members so that you can have the right conversations with the right people at the

right time. Inevitably, a population will shift over time, so you'll want a solution that supports recruitment to ensure your membership or citizen panel continues to accurately reflect the local community.

You'll also want to be sure your chosen solution simplifies the creation of compelling surveys and other engagement mechanisms, and makes it easy for members to provide responses and feedback online.

With the ability to capture more structured feedback from your membership, you'll find the data you gather is more robust. Ideally, your platform will incorporate tools for data analysis and reporting, to help you gain deeper insights into your local community to support service planning and delivery that will help provide optimal outcomes for everyone.

Civica Engage: helping you deliver what your community needs

Civica Engage is a unique centralised, cloud-based platform that combines communications and engagement with powerful data-related functionality to meet your needs for:

- Membership or citizen panel recruitment, management and engagement

- Data capture, management, analysis and reporting.

It's an efficient solution for effective community engagement that can be run using a smaller team, to help you redirect more resources towards patient care.

Merging memberships with Civica Engage

If you're involved in a merger of NHS organisations that already use Civica Engage, Civica specialists can help ensure integration of the various membership datasets.

When University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust was created through the merger of Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals and Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts, Civica helped bring their memberships together into a single Civica Engage database. With Civica's support, the newly formed Trust was able to:

- Communicate the merger plans to over 16,000 members

- Manage member opt-out communications

- Update member information via a dedicated helpline

- Transfer membership data into the new Civica Engage database.

Membership recruitment and management

Civica Engage gives you a simple way to manage tens of thousands of membership records and the associated data. It supports passive recruitment by integrating with the recruitment form you publish on your website. For Foundation Trusts, the transfer of staff data to Citizen Engage is automated, and includes checks to prevent creation of duplicate records.

Membership or panel data that has so far been held on spreadsheets can be uploaded to Civica Engage. If you have concerns about your current data being cold, you can use Civica Engage to find out if people want to continue being members. And if you feel that your membership or panel data needs a significant overhaul, Civica can optionally provide an active recruitment service through a specialist partner.

With Civica Engage you can also report on deceased members and so exclude them from future communications. In this way, you avoid the potential for causing distress to relatives and the associated reputational damage for your organisation.

Data capture, analysis and reporting

Civica Engage makes it straightforward to run targeted campaigns based on your membership or citizen panel demographic data, which is only ever two clicks away. For example, a Foundation Trust could invite all female members aged 18 to 45 to respond to a survey about their experiences of maternity services over the past year.

It's easy to design and run surveys straight out of the Civica Engage platform, which also collects and stores the data, ready for analysis and reporting in just a few clicks. Everything is faster, more convenient and more efficient than working on spreadsheets, which helps you save time and deliver more for less. You can additionally enrich the data you collect via Civica Engage with data from other sources to enable even more informed decision-making.

Civica Engage also lets you feed back to your members and other stakeholders by email on what's been learned from a survey, what plans you're developing as a result, and what next steps will be taken to help reduce health inequalities.
Because it's simple to communicate by email straight from the platform, you can easily invite members to AGMs and other events; put events into calendars; and report on responses to invitations, which helps with planning and logistics.

Data security and protection

With Civica Engage you can be confident you're keeping membership data more secure and protecting it better than when using spreadsheets. Civica Engage is a secure cloud-based solution that meets all the required security accreditations.

The solution also helps you comply more easily with UK GDPR subject access requests (SARs), as you can quickly and confidently locate all the data held in Civica Engage relating to each individual member.

Conclusion

HiQiP makes it clear that NHS organisations need to collect good quality, robust data to better understand the populations they serve, in order to ensure equitable access to services.

Depending on what your data reveals about your local community, the actions you take to reduce health inequalities could involve, for example:

- Planning the inclusive restoration of services, especially where pre-existing disparities in access, experience and outcomes have been thrown into relief by the pandemic

- Mitigating against the digital exclusion of individuals and groups by offering appropriate alternative routes to care

- Accelerating preventative programmes that engage groups who are at greatest risk of poor health outcomes.

The capabilities provided by Civica Engage are ideal for supporting Foundation Trusts and ICBs in their efforts to reduce the health inequalities affecting their local populations Civica Engage will help you interact more effectively with your membership or citizen panel and improve your demographic datasets; while the platform's powerful data analysis and reporting tools will underpin faster, more targeted planning and decision-making, guided by local evidence.

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About Civica Engagement Solutions

With a suite of solutions covering patient and employee experience, community engagement and corporate governance, Civica Engagement Solutions enable over 185 healthcare organisations to build and support engaged staff, members, patients, communities and stakeholders. Civica Engagement Solutions include:

- **Civica Declare** – Governance and conflicts of interest platform

- **Civica Engage** – Membership, panel and stakeholder management platform

- **Civica Community Engage** – Community engagement platform

- **Civica Experience** – Patient and employee experience platform

- **Research and Community** – Insight services for stakeholder engagement.

Find out more

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