

Provider collaboratives



Delivering the new collectivism...

Provider collaboratives began in mental health services, working with:

- **CAMHS inpatient services (tier 4 services)**
- **Adult low and medium secure services (both mental health and learning disability)**
- **Adult eating disorder services.**

Both the financial sums and the responsibilities involved are substantial. And they are expanding. Current guidance says: *“All trusts providing acute and mental health services are expected to be part of **one or more** provider collaboratives by April 2022. Community trusts, ambulance trusts and non-NHS providers should be part of provider collaboratives where this would benefit patients and makes sense for the providers and systems involved. ICS leaders, trusts and system partners, with support from NHS England and NHS Improvement regions, are expected to work to identify shared goals, appropriate membership and governance, and ensure activities are well aligned with ICS priorities.”*

But now across all sectors, these are new decision-making arrangements, with significant influence over strategy and policy. Some commentators are suggesting they could rival and even supplant the ICSs in terms of influence and authority.

What's on the agenda for PCs....?

PCs have a huge agenda but at the same time they have a very large opportunity to improve both quality and value for money. But what is the scale of the challenge, and what are the key questions?:

Governance

- How will decisions be made within the collaborative, and how will disputes be resolved?
- Will everything be by consensus, or are majority decisions possible for some issues?
- What will the scheme of delegation look like? How will members hold each other to account?
- What is the role of the lead provider as compared to other providers – can they take decisions which everyone else disagrees with?
- What is the role of the independent sector here – full partners, with full voting rights? Bearing a level of risk? Or secondary partners, carrying less risk, and consulted only on relevant issues?
- How do we transact and manage this via a constituent process?



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Finance

- How will any financial squeeze be targeted?
- How will this be managed via a collaborative process?
- Will commissioners contract solely with lead providers, or continue to maintain some direct contracts?
- What levels of capacity should be provided / contracted for to manage fluctuating demand?

Quality

- How can collaboratives reduce unwarranted variation and inequality in health outcomes, in access to services, in patient experience?
- How can collaboratives improve resilience across services, for example by providing mutual aid, combining pathways, sharing workforce?
- Where are the opportunities for specialisation and consolidation, especially in low-volume services?
- How will data sharing be developed - sharing both population health and performance data to ensure evidence-based decision-making?
- How will collaboratives plan for need, not simply demand?

Niche have a range of tools and techniques which can help your PC to develop and to thrive. These include specialist modelling approaches (including Sim:pathy, our tool developed specifically for mental health) to help you to think through questions of capacity and demand. They also include systematic and rigorous approaches to cross-organisational governance; and appreciative approaches to evaluation, as changes are implemented and take root. Our experienced consultants will work with you to ensure your collaborative:

- Has a clear vision and sense of common purpose
- Translates this vision into detailed and deliverable plans for service structures, volumes and relationships
- Establishes and maintains effective governance arrangements, so that your plans are delivered in practice, partner organisations have clear lines of communication and responsibility, and future risks and opportunities are identified and addressed.

Niche are best placed to provide you with expert advisory...

We have over 30 years' experience of supporting mental health services, with specialists working in:

- **Capacity, demand and finance**
- **Strategy and quality**
- **Governance and constitutional work**

Niche were chosen by the Department of Health, back in 2018, to be **the independent evaluator of the first wave of provider collaboratives in mental health**. Since then, we have been working on these issues with Trusts and systems across the country. This has included work on all of delegated clinical areas, as well as linked work with general and acute mental health services, and the Covid recovery plans for mental health.

We are ISO certified for both quality management and information governance, and on several national consultancy frameworks. We can help you to identify the key questions and opportunities facing your collaborative – and how best to address them.

**insight
integrity
impact**



James Fitton - Partner, Modelling & Evaluation

James has 32 years' experience. His Oxford MSc in evidence-based healthcare was based on a drive to ensure that good evidence is used and implemented in local services and gives him the theoretical base from which to ensure appropriate methods are deployed, and justifiable conclusions drawn.

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