

Engaging with people and communities

Working with people and communities continues to be an important priority for the ICS and we have committed to putting patients and the public at the heart of our work. During the last year the ICB has continued to develop its approach in this area.

The ICB's [Engagement Assurance Committee](#) (EAC) is a well established part of our governance and assurance on engagement. Members of public form the majority membership which also includes a Non-Executive Director (who chairs the committee), the Medical Director and the Chief of Staff, who are all board members, along with the Director of Communications and Engagement, ensuring that the importance of working in partnership with people and communities is championed by senior leadership. The Director of South East London Healthwatch and the Director of Voluntary Sector Collaboration and Partnerships, [both members of the Integrated Care Partnership](#), are also members of the committee bringing senior independence to the committee. Key areas engagement projects and work that the committee has provided assurance on in the last year include: NHS 111, women's and girls' health hubs, the development of a new guide to health care, the engagement workplan, the refresh of the [ICS engagement toolkit](#), the developing approach to recognising involvement and the findings from the refresh of the SEL People's Panel.

The committee also receives regular reports from [SEL Healthwatch](#) and the [Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector \(VCSE\) Alliance](#) including their work on [widening participation in the health care workforce for under-represented groups](#).

A key area of work in 2024 - 2025 was listening to local women and girls from diverse communities across south east London to understand about their needs and how they wish to access healthcare to inform the development of women's and girls' health hubs to provide more accessible, integrated care in our communities, as part of the implementation of the Women's Health Strategy.

We were keen to hear from people about the following:

- What health services and support are most important to women and girls
- How can these services be delivered so they are easier to access
- How can we ensure women and girls across our diverse communities have access to knowledge and information about their health and wellbeing - including where to go and how to know if they might need support from a healthcare professional
- What are the barriers women and girls face in relation to health
- What could we do to remove these barriers so that everyone can access the care and support they need, regardless of where they live or their situation.

We invited local women and girls' feedback through an online survey and a conversation forum. The survey and forum were promoted via diverse channels including a social media campaign and we received 1,434 responses.



In addition to collecting online feedback we attended several face-to-face community events to complement this insight:

- Ageing Well fair – Lambeth
- South East London College - Welcoming Fair, Bexley Campus
- South East London College - Welcoming Fair, Bromley Campus
- Ronald McDonald House
- Lambeth College – Freshers fair, Clapham Campus
- Lambeth College – Freshers fair, Nine Elms Campus
- Greenwich Islamic Centre
- South Asian Heritage Festival – Bexley
- The Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and Indo-American Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO) workshop



These sessions allowed us to hear from over 250 local women and girls. We focused on listening to young women (16-25) and women and girls from communities facing barriers to care and experiencing health inequalities including South Asian, Black African, Black Caribbean, and Latin American communities. Issues raised include:

- Community support services which support the 'village', but created and delivered by community members in response to a need in their own community
- Information on services to be translated into different languages. Voluntary sector and community organisations to be more involved as they are often the first point for connection and communication.
- Support for all women around menopause: what to expect, resources available, real conversations with people who have already gone through it, real support with different options to help women as they go through it rather than just leaflets.
- Easy access to information about sexual health and contraception as well as health screenings.
- More mental health treatment and support that is longer than a few weeks/months and for older people (over 40)
- Quick availability of quality and accurate information around endometriosis, ovarian cysts and other conditions.

We also conducted two online focus groups to gain further detailed insight to contribute to the co-design of the Women's Health Hub. These sessions were a good opportunity to continue the conversations and allowed us to test proposed solutions. These sessions aimed to explore experiences of women's and girls' health services, barriers to access, challenges faced by women and girls in our community as well as developing solutions to these issues.

Participants shared their experiences, highlighting the need for better diagnosis and treatment for issues like menstrual health and pelvic floor issues. Participants also raised challenges, such as limited appointments for services like contraception, menopause support and pelvic floor care. Cultural and demographic factors also impact how some women access healthcare. These discussions showed a strong need for more accessible and personalised care.

Participants discussed where people first access health information and it was noted that this is often online and includes Google as well as NHS websites, with some participants noting that on-line sources can be unreliable and wanting a more trusted source of information. Participants suggested improving the NHS App to make it more useful for accessing a wide range of health information as many people already have access to it.

Plans to pilot women's and girls' health hubs in Lambeth and Greenwich are underway, incorporating these insights to enhance accessible care and address health inequalities.

[More information is available on our Let's talk health and care engagement platform.](#)

Another key project was to gain views and insight to inform the redesign of the NHS 111 service in south east London as part of the re-procurement process. We listened to local people through a survey, outreach sessions and community events to understand what works well and what needs improvement.



The survey was promoted to members of the public in south east London, as well as to over 1,000 members of the South East London People’s Panel. Over 400 people shared their experiences through the survey, highlighting the value of NHS 111, and pointing out areas for improvement such as callback, waiting times and accessibility barriers. In addition, we carried out targeted outreach with diverse communities which helped us to collect further insights into how to overcome challenges and address

health inequalities such as language barriers and digital exclusion

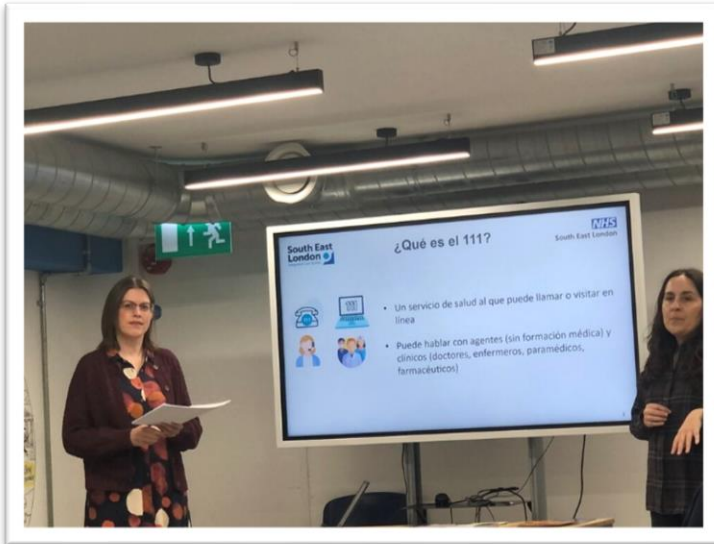
“Yes. I have found 111 exceptionally helpful, informative and efficient.”

“Yes, as an autistic person I hate going to A&E. Too many people overwhelm me and I know this would make my situation a lot worse.”

“It is an extremely essential part of the health service especially since the pandemic and I am unable to get a face-to-face appointment with my doctor - I feel lucky to have this service available because of this’.”

[The key findings and the full report is available on the project page on our Let’s talk health and care platform.](#)

Over the summer 2024 we organised a series of face-to-face outreach sessions, aimed at connecting with groups and communities that have been identified as not accessing the NHS 111 service, facing barriers in accessing the service, or who access the service much more than the general population. We visited various community events and groups, including:



- Black Inspire - community event in Lambeth
- Men in Sheds, an Age UK initiative in Bexley
- Orpington Health and Wellbeing Café, run by Orpington Primary Care Network in Bromley
- Bengali Women's Group in Greenwich
- Indo-American Refugee & Migrant Organisation and Latin American Women's Rights Service
- South East London Learning Disability and Autism Forum

These visits allowed us to gather insight and views from over 100 individuals which further informed our plans to improve people's experience of using the service and identified ways to overcome barriers that people are facing when accessing 111. The feedback allowed us to evaluate our current NHS 111 service from the patient perspective, ensuring that, in the redesign, we keep those elements that patients value and address issues to further improve patient access and experience.

[More details are available on the project page on our engagement platform.](#)

We supported the national conversation on Change NHS to inform the development of the 10 Year Plan by promoting the national on-line portal and hosting two on-line webinars in January and February 2025 with 74 members of the public focusing on three shift areas:

- Shift 1: moving more care from hospitals to communities
- Shift 2: making better use of technology in health and care
- Shift 3: focussing on preventing sickness, not just treating it

Key issues that people identified include: general welcoming of the use of technology that works for both staff and patients yet concerns were raised about confidentiality and hacking and the potential for exacerbating health inequalities for those who are digitally excluded; general positive response to moving more care out of hospital and into community settings or at home with the acknowledgement that social care is a key partner in this shift area and the caveat that not everyone's home environment is suitable for receiving care and that good public transport links and parking is required; and recognition of the importance of prevention with some participants highlighting the need to focus on children and young people and mental health and the need to address wider determinants of health such as air quality, worklessness, housing, access to healthy food and transport.

In addition in conjunction with South London Listens we worked with Citizens UK who held two face to face round table discussions with their community leaders with the south east London session taking place in January 2025.

You can read more at [Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future | Let's Talk Health and Care South East London](#)

The screenshot shows the NHS South East London website. At the top left is the NHS logo and 'South East London'. At the top right are links for 'Home', 'In your area', a search bar, 'Sign in', and 'Register'. The main banner features the title 'Let's Talk Health and Care in South East London' on a dark blue background. To the right is a colorful illustration of diverse people and healthcare professionals. Below the banner, a yellow button says 'Join Let's Talk Health and Care in SEL'. Text below the button reads: 'Welcome to Let's Talk Health and Care in South East London', 'This is an online community for you to share your ideas, discuss important topics, provide feedback and help people live healthier lives in our shared communities.', and 'Get involved and participate in conversations about health in south east London.'

We continue to develop and have good engagement with our on-line engagement platform, [Let's talk health and care in south east London](#). We have published 11 new projects in the last year and continue to update on-going projects. Since April 2024 we have had 41,000 visits to the site with just over 18,000 informed visits (such as people clicking through and downloading documents) and nearly 10,000 engaged visits (people responding to a survey or chat forum). We promote all our projects as well as those of partner organisations in our monthly Get Involved newsletter which has a combined circulation across south east London of over 2,000 people with partners also sending it on to their mailing lists. You can read and sign up to our Get Involved newsletter at [Engagement newsletter - sign up | South East London ICS](#).

We have further developed our insight library on the ICS website to share insight from people and communities across partners and programmes to maximise the value of engagement, avoid duplication and engagement fatigue and enable programmes to focus engagement activity on working with people and communities to identify solutions to issues raised rather than gaining further insight. The ICB worked with Mabadiliko CIC, a local Black led organisation, to develop and share a range of insight from people from Black African and Caribbean, South Asian and economically disadvantaged communities. The report synthesises insight gained from seven distinct programmes, previously carried out by Mabadiliko CIC across south east London, and it identifies recurring themes and insights across three key areas:

- Individual and community factors: including health knowledge, personal beliefs, and the impact of social circles on health behaviours
- Relationships with healthcare professionals and local services: exploring trust, communication, and experiences of care

- Impact of wider system and societal influences: examining systemic issues, including racism in healthcare and the effects of service digitalisation

Mabadiliko attended and presented the key findings at the ICB Equalities Sub Committee and the SEL Themes and Concerns Group. You can read the report and other insight we have gained and shared at [What we've heard from local people and communities - South East London ICS](#).

We have also been working with Jungle Green, a market research agency, in the autumn to refresh the South East London People's Panel. Jungle Green carried out the original recruitment of over 1,000 members to be reflective of the population according to the 2021 Census. The refresh in 2024 focused on people from



communities who are often underserved and marginalised. They have recruited nearly 300 new panel members of which

- 45% identify as Black or Black British
- 9% mixed heritage
- 8% Asian
- 27% aged 16–24
- 28% aged 25-34
- 6% where their gender differs from their birth gender
- 8% bisexual
- 4% gay women
- 2% gay men

A final report of the survey findings which took part as part of the recruitment is available at [What we've heard from local people and communities - South East London ICS](#).

The South East London engagement team continues to organise and facilitate the ICS Engagement Practitioners' Network (EPN) which meets on a bi-monthly basis to share insight, align engagement and share good practice and learning across partnerships and place. The network brings together engagements leads and practitioners from across health and care partner organisations across south east London including the directors of South East London Healthwatch and the Director of Voluntary Sector Collaboration and Partnerships. Key discussions in the last year have included the pilot approach to recognising involvement, the implementation of the VCSE Charter, the development of women's and girls' health hubs, approaches to and learning from co-production, the System Sustainability programme and the development of integrated neighbourhood working. The engagement team also facilitates and organises a regular bi-monthly meeting of co-ordinators of the community champions schemes across the south east London boroughs which provides a network to share information, best practice, opportunities for engagement and insight. Key agenda items have included women's and girls' health hubs, winter well and vaccination campaigns, the new Guide to Healthcare and Food for Purpose and their partnership with the ICB to work with people living with and at risk of diabetes from African Caribbean, South Asian, Polish, Latin American, Portuguese,

and Spanish communities to codesign solutions for current diabetes service provision; These networks are key forums for sharing learning and insight as we continue to develop a more aligned approach to working with people and communities across south east London.