

**The work of the Community Assembly: Our Year in Review**

Launched in September 2021 the Community Assembly for the **East and North Herts Health and Care Partnership** has grown from strength to strength with a strong cohort of patient, voluntary and community, NHS and social care representatives working together to jointly set the agenda so that issues of concern to patients can be heard.

Chaired and managed by **Healthwatch Hertfordshire** as an independent patient champion the assembly is involved with the partnership's strategic direction and provides a collaborative forum for a broad range of voices within communities who want to help shape and improve local health and care services.

**As the NHS continues to transform, the Assembly has explored some key issues and heard about some exciting initiatives all aimed at improving patient experience, including:**

An insightful overview of some exciting district level **partnership initiatives** targeted at improving health in their local areas. Focussed on place-based health inequalities they gave examples of their work including a **Homelessness Project in East Herts** and a **Mental Health in Young People Project in Stevenage**. You can listen to some young people talking about their *5 Ways to Well-being framework* [here](#).

**Hospital at Home** - where using a Lived Experience Advisory Panel helped the partnership to find ways of looking after patients safely in their own home by avoiding hospital admission or allowing for quicker hospital discharge. The model helps to speed up recovery whilst freeing up hospital beds. Read more about it [here](#).

*"I don't know anyone who likes being in hospital, so the sooner you get in and out, the better."*

*Hospital at Home patient feedback*

The **Outpatient Transformation Programme** including the introduction of Patient Initiated Follow-up Pathways (PIFU) for some patients to initiate appointments if and when needed and the new Patient Engagement Portal (PEP) which is a new way for patients to receive information about appointments and treatment with re-designed pathways and streamlined contact centre processes.

The new **Heart Failure Service** enables patients with heart failure to be monitored closer to home and benefit from earlier identification, diagnosis and management of their condition. Patients have access to a consultant cardiologist and specialist nurses working alongside community nurses, care providers and hospices and the new direct access echocardiogram pathway.

*"I'm pleased to be one of the first to be part of a **virtual ward for heart failure**. The programme provides the reassurance of being closely monitored with the **convenience of being at home**, not having to travel for hospital appointments."*

*Virtual ward heart failure service patient feedback*

Developments in **Primary Care** covering GP Access, pharmacy, optometry and dentistry. Examples include empowerment through GP self-referral and access to records, telephony upgrades and the new wider role of **'Pharmacy First'** launched on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. New clinical pathways for this service include sinusitis, insect bites, shingles, UTIs, impetigo, sore throats and acute otitis media.

## Patient Engagement Forum (PEF)

September 2023 saw the launch of a new Patient Engagement Forum for the Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board and the Chair of PEF, Alan Bellinger provides regular updates to the Assembly about their work, with contributions from patient reps Mike Carn and Claire Uwins.

Having an advisory role, networking is key to the group and bringing the patient voice to the Integrated Care Board. **PEF and the Board** have together identified a programme of **14** key issues and will be focussing on some 'deep dive' areas including GP practices, patient choice and urgent and emergency care.

## Way Forward

### Health and Care Partnerships – April 2024

One of four partnerships across the system, the East and North Herts Health and Care Partnership (ENHHCP) will have a clear plan of action to enable the delivery of a future operating model. This will be overseen by the Integrated Care System (ICS) and monitored by the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The plan has four work streams:

- delivering system priority programmes of work
- developing financial arrangements and reporting
- reviewing governance arrangements and
- defining a longer-term vision and ambition.

*There is a huge opportunity for the Community Assembly to influence and inform priorities of the partnership. As we move towards the Health and Care Partnership model in April it is so important to have the patient voice at all levels.*

**Community Assembly Attendance** is now well established with a core and growing group who attend on a regular basis. Our PPG representatives have a powerful impact on the group as will the new Patient Engagement Forum, but we still want to broaden our reach in terms of diversity and representation to include, for example, more community and faith groups, people from seldom heard communities and more Council representation.

PPG representative  
commenting on  
Community Assembly



**“As NHS patients, our thoughts and suggestions are listened to **and fed into the new ways the NHS is working”****

## How to join us

If you would like to find out more or get involved with Community Assembly, please email your details to: [info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk)

We meet every quarter on a Friday from 9.30am – 11.30am, with our next meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024.



**Click or scan to find out more about our next meeting**