

locality

the power of community

An introduction to Integrated Care Systems (ICSs)

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What are Integrated Care Systems?

Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are place-based partnerships which have four fundamental purposes:

1. Improving population health and healthcare
2. Tackling unequal outcomes and access
3. Enhancing productivity and value for money
4. Helping the NHS to support broader social and economic development.

When you hear the phrase Integrated Care System, it is easiest to think about the geographic area across which health and care services will be organised. So, the ICS is a geographic area rather than one specific organisation. The ICS can be a huge area and cover a population of up to 3 million people. That is why, underneath the “system” level (the big geographic area) the NHS and other partners will be working at a local authority and neighbourhood level to understand the needs of that large group of people.

They are tasked with developing stronger partnerships with others outside of the ‘system’ such as the VCSE sector, housing and education with a focus on population (aka public) health and reducing health inequalities.

The ICS Structure:

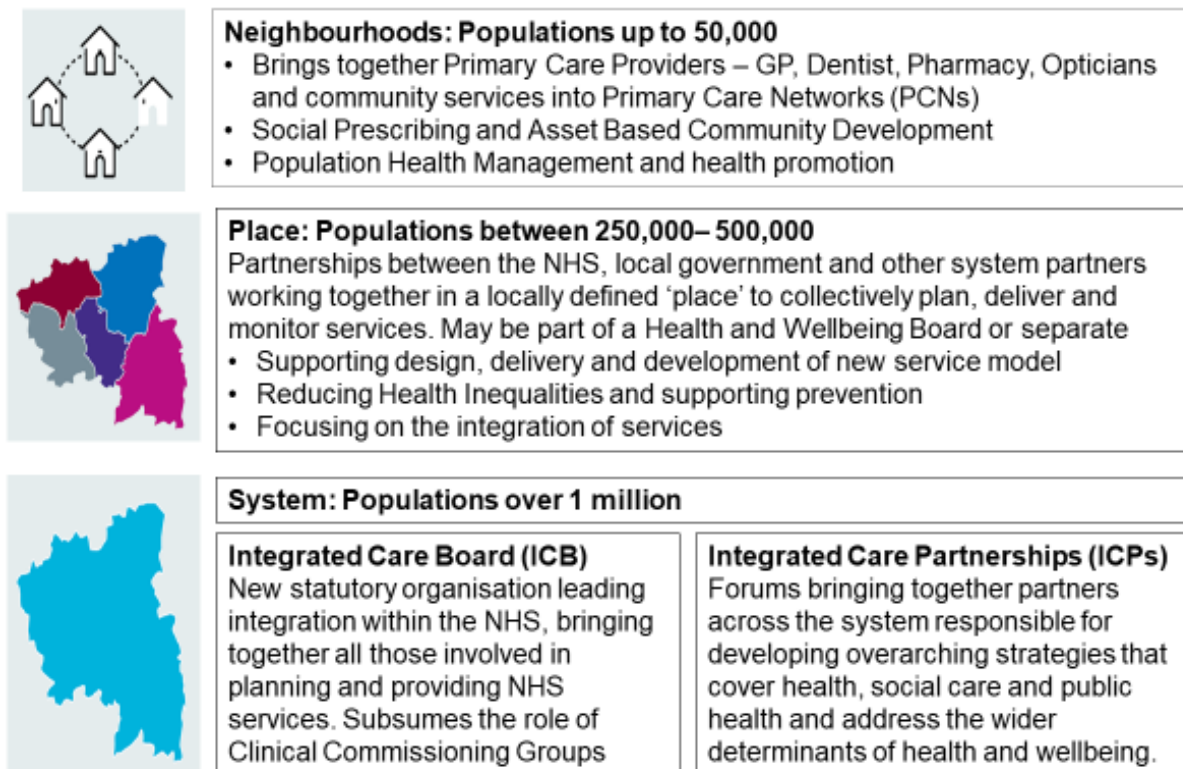


Figure 1: NHS England, Voluntary Partnerships Team slide pack 2022

What will Integrated Care Systems look like?

Integrated Care Systems became statutory in July 2022. Of course, just like Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) did, the Integrated Care System area will need to have a board. They are comprised of two key structures – a board and a wider partnership group.

- 1. The Integrated Care Board (ICB):** this essentially the replacement for the CCG Board.
 - The members of the ICB occupy very similar positions to those on the CCG boards.
 - It is responsible for commissioning goods and services across the ICS geography.
 - They will also be responsible for putting together a 50 year joint forward plan – on how to meet the needs of the population across the entire geography.
- 2. The Integrated Care Partnership (ICP):**
 - The ICP is a larger partnership which includes the members of the Integrated Care Board but also representatives from the hospital trusts in the area, GP federations, local authority representatives, VCSE representatives and others who play a role in addressing the health and care needs of the local population.
 - The ICP will have responsibility for producing an Integrated Care Strategy – this will set out the needs of the population across the entire ICS geography and how they should be addressed
 - The Strategy will be informed by work at a Place level (local authority level) to identify the needs of the population – this is done through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for a council – and the strategy of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Working at “Place” Level

In setting up the Integrated Care Systems, NHS England has not been prescriptive about what “place level” means. For the majority of Integrated Care Systems, they have taken this to mean local authority level. More specifically – upper tier (county) or unitary level.

What opportunities are there for Community Organisations?

ICSs have been tasked with ensuring VCSE partnership should be embedded as an essential part of how ICSs operate at all levels but this is likely to be through an alliance or group of VCSE organisations acting as a single point of contact at place level.

The model below shows a recommended structure for VCSE partnership at the different levels of the ICS structure.

Model for VCSE strategic engagement



The model below, based on emerging work in ICSs, shows a recommended structure for VCSE partnerships at wider ICS, place and neighbourhood level that will support relationships to deliver better health and care for local people.

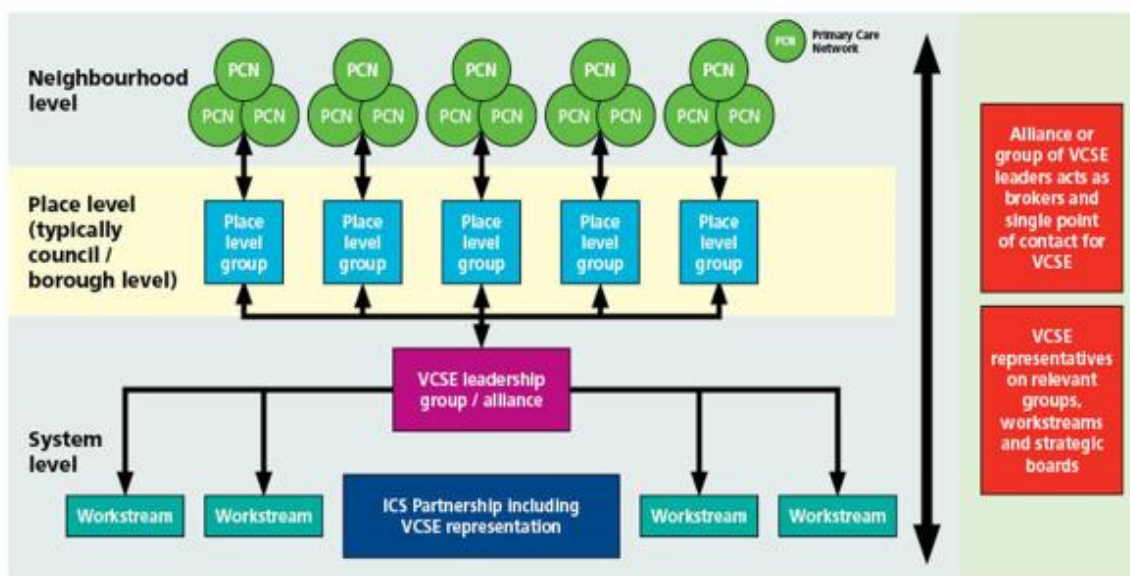


Figure 2: NHS England, [ICS Implementation guidance](#)

We know from speaking with individuals in areas where the ICS process has already started, that local Council's for Voluntary Services (CVS) are one of the main mechanisms which are being used to involve community organisations in the health system. This typically happens at the "place level" as councils work directly with local infrastructure bodies to involve the VCSE. And it is usually groupings of CVSs across the geography of an ICS which come together to decide on who will represent the VCSE at an ICS level on various strategic boards and sub-groups. This will, however, differ from ICS to ICS.

For most of our members, engagement will take place with their local Primary Care Networks (PCNs) at the neighbourhood level. Often through activities such as social prescribing. While engagement with PCNs varies even within a local area, they remain a key link for community organisations and the health system. However the [Integration White Paper](#) published in February 2022 stated “places will be the engine for delivery and reform while ICSs will be responsible for at-scale planning”.

We think this means that influencing at ICS will be unlikely for individual VCSE organisations but opportunities will continue to develop at place level which is more aligned to member footprint.

What can I do to prepare for the changes to the system?

As a starting point, there are a few things you can do to find out more and prepare for this huge change in the health system:

- Make sure you are part of your local council for voluntary service and find out who the VCSE representative(s) are on the local Health and Wellbeing Board. You can usually find this information on your council's website.
- Find out which Integrated Care System covers your local area. You can take a look at the following website to see what Integrated Care looks like in your area: [NHS England » Integrated care in your area](#)
- Take a look at the guidance which Integrated Care Systems have been given by the Department for Health and Social Care: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/B0905-vcse-and-ics-partnerships.pdf>
- Engage with any existing contacts in the health system in your area: will their role remain the same, who is the primary contact for VCSE organisations in the area?



Locality is the national membership network for community organisations that bring local people together to meet local needs. Locality supports local community organisations to be strong and successful, helping them to build a fairer society. Locality provides specialist advice, peer-learning, resources, and campaigns to create better operating conditions for our members.

Unlock the power in your community with us

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