

Public Accounts Committee Integrating health and social care inquiry

National Voices

National Voices is the coalition of health and care charities that stands for people being in control of their health and care. National Voices developed the national definitions of 'integration' used in the 2013 Department of Health and Arm's Length Bodies' [Shared commitment to integrated care](#)¹.

Summary

- Integration remains hugely important to people who need care and support.
- Progress is slow because many national and local system leaders have lost sight of the goal of high quality coordinated care.
- There is success, but the scale is too small.
- There needs to be a renewed shared national commitment to provide person centred coordinated care for all who need it.

Response

Integration remains hugely important to people who need care and support

Millions of people who need to use several health and care services over time still find that care is fragmented, uncoordinated and worse than it should be. National Voices' [Webs of care project](#)² provides a stark visualisation of how 'the system' looks to patients and carers.

These failures have a cost – in poorer outcomes from sub-optimal care; and in the time, effort and money that people themselves have to put in to following different care pathways, attending multiple appointments, or chasing up answers, assessments and equipment from different providers.

None of that is easy when you are ill, depressed or approaching the end of life. For these people, person-centred coordinated care remains a highly prized goal.

Progress is slow because many national and local system leaders have lost sight of the goal of high quality coordinated care.

In 2013 the Department of Health and its Arm's Length Bodies had a common vision provided by National Voices, and a shared commitment, but these have been diluted and obscured by:

- Over-reliance on an ineffective funding mechanism (the Better Care Fund).
- Incompetence and failure to produce meaningful outcome measures designed around the needs of people. Instead, being driven by outcome measures for 'the system' such as hospital admissions.
- People churn – eight of the 13 national leaders who signed the 2013 commitment have moved on, and many local leaders have too.
- Policy churn – a range of new initiatives related to the Five Year Forward View have obscured the goals of integration; and the 'vanguard' and 'STP' initiatives have altered the geographies within which the integration pioneers are working.
- The context of overall underfunding of both health and social care, which has forced providers to focus on survival rather than collaboration, and drained away money that was meant for 'transformation'.

There is success, but the scale is too small

As the National Audit Office report indicates, local areas leading integration have defaulted to focusing on small targeted groups of, usually older people, with complex conditions, who cost 'the system' a lot of money.

People still missing out include children and young people; people who are not elderly but have complex conditions; people with continuing mental health needs; people with both physical and mental health conditions; people with several long term conditions; and people in the last year of life. Often their carers continue to bear the burden of coordinating their use of services – at the expense of their own time that should be spent caring.

There needs to be a renewed shared national commitment to provide person-centred coordinated care for all who need it, based on the definition in the [Narrative for person-centred coordinated care](#)³, and with person-centred outcomes measures derived from that narrative.

References

1. Integrated Care: Our Shared Commitment, Department of Health, 2013:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-care>
2. Webs of care, National Voices, 2013:
<http://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/publications/our-publications/webs-care>
3. A narrative for person-centred coordinated care, National Voices and Think Personal Act Local, 2013:
<http://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/publications/our-publications/narrative-person-centred-coordinated-care>

Contact

Andrew McCracken
Head of Communications

National Voices

020 3176 0737

andrew.mccracken@nationalvoices.org.uk