

The Improvement Unit Annual Review 2023/24

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Our year



**I am pleased to present
The Improvement
Unit's Annual Review
for 2023/24.**

This Annual Review showcases the work and the impact of the Improvement Unit over the past 12 months.

We are immensely proud to be part of the NHS family working with providers, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and NHS England (NHSE) on a regional and national basis, to deliver sustainable improvements across a wider variety of health and care areas.

We have a track record of achieving excellent outcomes for our clients. This is achieved by working in partnership to fully understand their needs and developing tailored solutions, underpinned by our operational excellence ethos and drawing on the breadth of skills and experience from the Improvement Unit team and our wider network of subject matter experts.

We are proud that we continue to receive positive feedback from our clients, with an average Net Promoter Score of 9.2 out of 10, confirming that they would be happy to recommend working with us to others.

The Review gives a snapshot of the diversity of our programmes of work and the impact that has been achieved.

Looking forward, we are continuing to build on our improvement work, with the emphasis on rapid improvement initiatives and quality improvement strategic partnering, as well as developing our approach to recovery and assurance of complex programmes.

Finally, I would like to thank all the team and those involved in our programmes for their fantastic efforts in delivering for our clients, partners and patients.

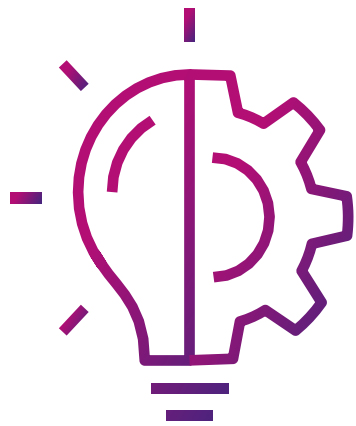
Ratna Taylor

Director of the Improvement Unit

A selection of our focus areas:

- 1. Improving mobile breast screening in Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley**
Improvement Unit provides blueprint for a review of mobile screening locations
- 2. Dementia Ambitions Toolkit and pathway improvement**
Improvement Unit develops innovative approach to improving dementia pathway
- 3. School Immunisation service evaluation**
Improvement Unit evaluation informs future commissioning of school aged immunisation service
- 4. National Maternity and Neonatal programme review and support**
Improvement Unit supports implementation of essential actions outlined by Dame Donna Ockenden for maternity services

Our impact



Delivering innovative and tailored consultancy and project support across the NHS

Impacted on

42

systems working on national programmes



Supported the improvement of services which serve

33m

people across England



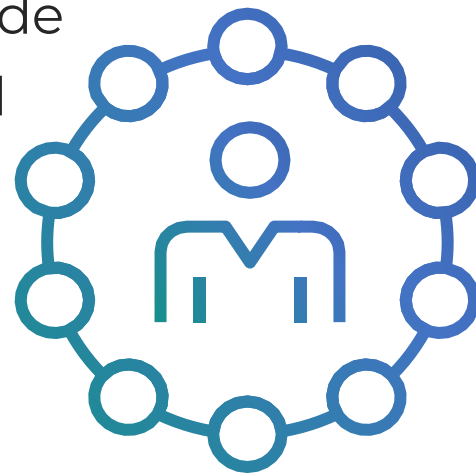
30+

Highly skilled programme, project and improvement specialists

Worked alongside

7 Integrated Care Systems

5 Provider Trusts



39

projects or programmes of work delivered to 20 different customers across health and social care

We were delighted to partner with

12 brand new customers during 2023/24



Our customers

During 2023/24 we worked alongside a wide range of NHS and health and care related organisations.

Our work has ranged from large national programmes of work with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHSE, to local and neighbourhood level engagement.

NHS Provider Trusts

1. Alder Hey Children's Hospital
2. Dudley
3. North Staffordshire
4. North West Ambulance Service
5. West London

Integrated Care Boards/ Integrated Care Systems

1. Black Country
2. Birmingham and Solihull
3. Cheshire and Merseyside
4. Greater Manchester
5. Lancashire and South Cumbria
6. Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
7. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

NHSE National

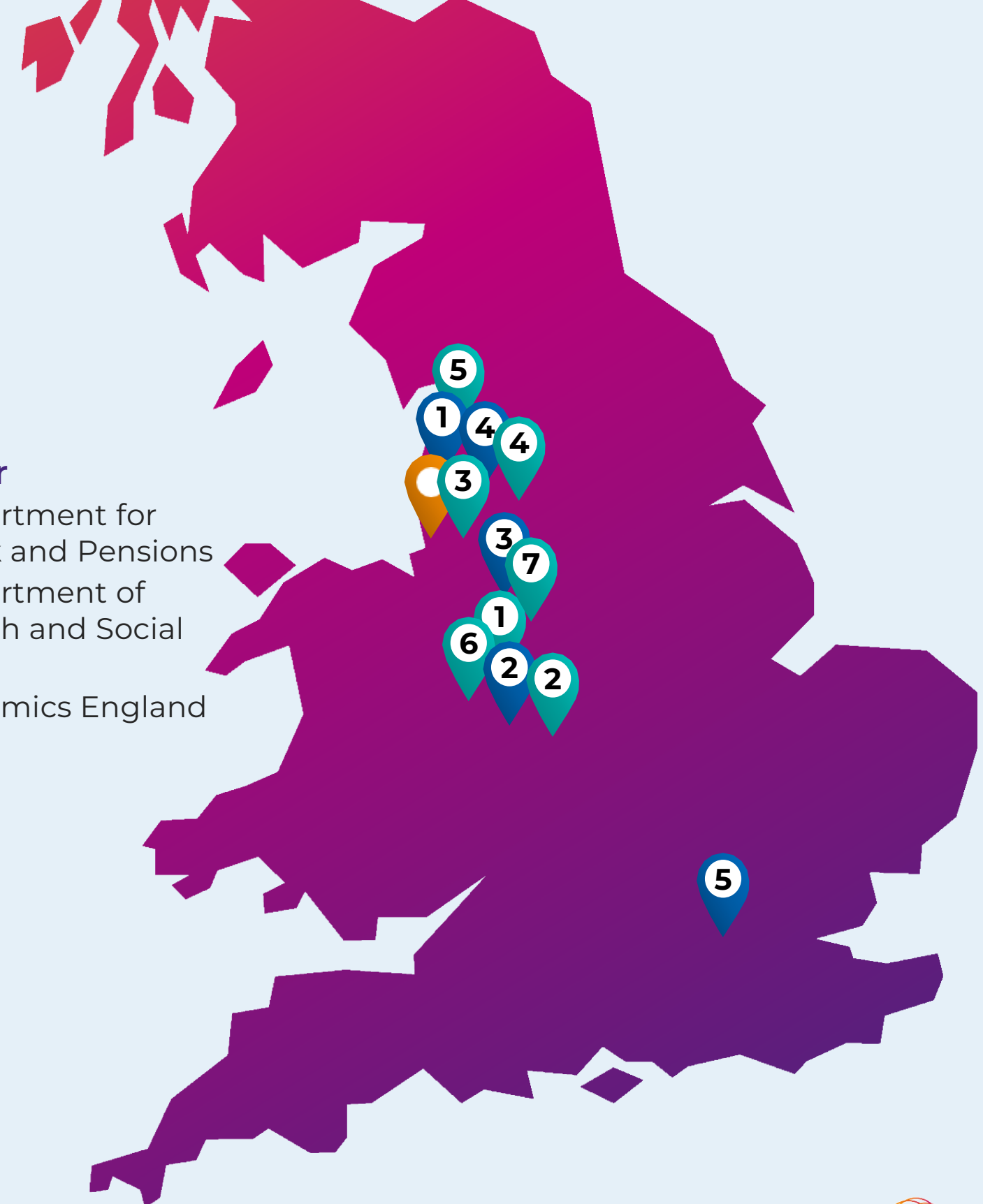
- Maternity
- Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism
- Primary Care
- Sickle Cell
- Weight Management

NHSE Regional Team Northwest

- Breast Screening
- Cervical Screening
- Health and Justice
- Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism
- Planning and Assurance
- Triple A screening

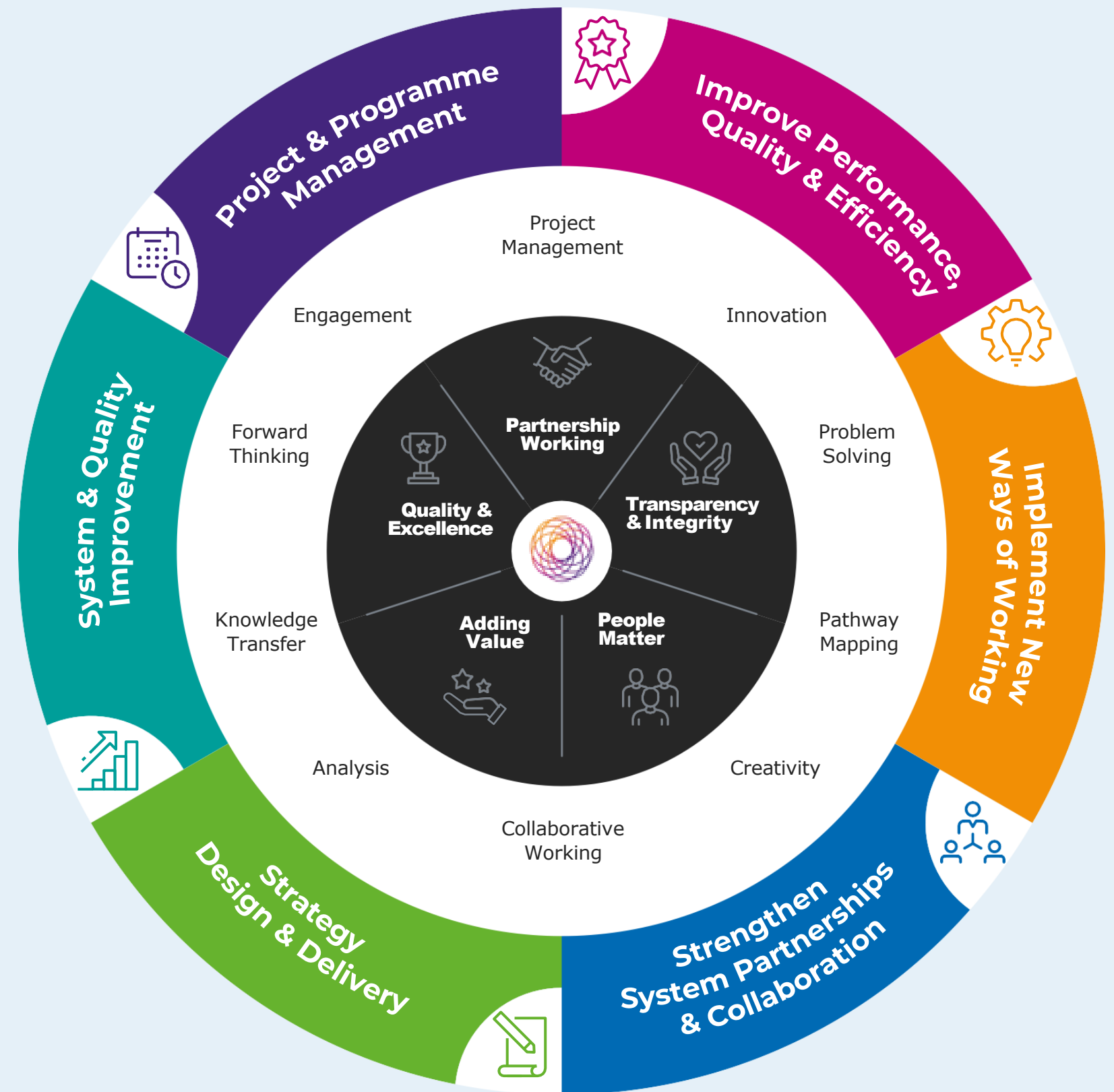
Other

- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department of Health and Social Care
- Genomics England



Our offer

-  System & Quality Improvement ▶
-  Project & Programme Management ▶
-  Improve Performance Quality & Efficiency ▶
-  Implement New Ways of Working ▶
-  Strengthen System Partnerships & Collaboration ▶
-  Strategy Design & Delivery ▶





System & Quality Improvement

- Work closely with system partners to deliver improvements across healthcare systems
- Redesign and strengthen system delivery to meet priorities, challenges and improve outcomes
- Support reductions in process variations to harmonise across organisations

Case Study: Development of a Dementia Ambitions Toolkit

Project/ aims:

The journey for people with dementia and their carers involves multiple services and organisations, across different commissioning boundaries; and there are myriad resources and guidance to achieve a high-quality care pathway.

Funded by DHSC, and working with 70 organisations across England, including NHSE policy teams, a range of ICBs, and The Alzheimer's Society, the project aimed to create a resource which unified existing knowledge and guidance into a single, user-friendly tool for Health and Care Places and systems.

What we did:

We created a self-assessment tool, comprised of 100 robust, evidence-based criteria, which enable Places and Systems to measure current provision, easily identifying strengths and gaps. This information can subsequently be used for strategy development, service improvement, benchmarking and identifying and sharing best practice.

The Dementia 100 tool follows the Well Pathway for Dementia and is founded on the NICE Quality Standards, Alzheimer's Society Strategy Toolkit Recommendations, and the Right Care Scenario optimum pathway for Dementia.

Our impact:

During 2023 and to date we have been working with the DHSC Dementia policy team, alongside NHSE, to modify, test, and validate the toolkit, preparing it for national rollout, accompanied by a comprehensive national implementation document and supporting guidance training materials.

We are now working with DHSC and NHSE to enable continued spread of the Dementia 100 in 2024/25, aligning the tool to other NHSE policy areas and ensuring a full package to support Health and Care systems to use the improved and validated tool for the greatest benefit.

“Where there are gaps in provision it supports collaborative working to agree how to address the gaps identified and agree a way forward to introduce improvements.”

Annette Darby
Dementia Lead for Adult Social Care
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council





Project & Programme Management

- We lead and deliver effective PMO support for largescale and complex programmes from small local projects to large national programmes
- Use best practice tools and techniques tailored to individual requirements

Case Study: NHS England North West Health and Justice Programme

Project/ aims:

We have been working with the NHSE North West Specialised Commissioning Health and Justice Team on a 2-year contract to support three key programmes across the northwest prison system.

These complex programmes contribute towards a framework for integration; to reduce inequality, improve healthcare and wellbeing services for everyone in secure and detained settings.

What we did:

- We visited all prisons to develop a pharmacy network and provided recommendations to improve standards and safety of pharmacy services at each site.
- Women's custodial review and transformation at HMP Styal to improve health outcomes for prisoners, governance, escalation and all areas of compliance in line with recommendations
- New networks developed, robust bid process in place for providers to apply for non-recurrent funds to support substance misuse and recurrent funds to support mental health across all 15 prisons

Our impact:

- Improvements in clinical outcomes for patients through reduction in medication errors and delays in routine treatment
- Improvement in patient experience and outcomes through the delivery of effective Maternity and Perinatal services
- Improvement in compliance at HMP Styal which had a positive impact on the reduction of health inequalities on the women's estate
- Improved access to mental health and substance misuse services which improves health outcomes and reduces reoffending rates

“The support the IU has provided since February 2023 has been instrumental in maintaining the programme's momentum despite complex issues, sudden changes in NHSE leadership and providers”

Kate Clay, Head of Health & Justice NHSE North West





Improve Performance, Quality & Efficiency

- Analysing key information to understand root causes of system challenges
- Partnering with stakeholders to co-develop improvement initiatives
- Facilitate learning amongst system partners to identify interventions that provide service improvements, focus on outcomes and add value

Case Study: Improving Mobile Breast Screening In Liverpool, Sefton, and Knowsley

Project/ aims:

The work supported the Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley Breast Screening Programme team to meet our mobile site review recommendations, leading to improved equity of access.

What we did:

An initial face-to-face workshop was conducted with the team to review the recommendations and devise an action plan to monitor and track the progress of implementing the proposed improvements. Deliverables included:

- Establishing a foundation for effective system working, including refreshing the program's stakeholder meetings
- Testing the new processes developed in phase 1 for relocating a mobile breast screening site
- Assisting the program team in developing a Service Level Agreement (SLA) process
- Ensuring internal governance encompass oversight of the mobile screening site management process
- Collaborating with stakeholders across the system to develop a dataset to monitor screening uptake across all mobile screening sites

Our impact:

- Increased engagement from senior leaders in the trust, bolstering support for the team and raising the profile of the programme.
- Established and documented governance arrangements around mobile screening sites, including clear escalation routes for risks and issues.
- Development and agreement of the SLA process by senior leaders in the trust, facilitating the negotiation and implementation of SLA's for all mobile screening sites.
- Negotiations led by our consultants resulted in a 60% reduction in costs for two mobile sites in the locality, with an SLA drafted with the landowner.
- Enhanced confidence among team members in executing the mobile site relocation process following a testing workshop led by our consultants.
- Creation of a suite of documents to support the team in further advancing and embedding the work into their operational practices.





Implement New Ways of Working

- Streamline pathways and clinical processes
- Undertake patient flow planning and modelling
- Facilitate workshops to address challenges and co-develop solutions

Case Study: Ockenden Maternity and Neonatal Review and Support

Project/ aims:

Implement immediate and essential actions outlined by Dame Donna Ockenden for maternity services. Establishing Independent Senior Advocate role and conducting comprehensive review of all NHS maternity services to prioritise patient-centred care, ensuring women and families are heard and integrated into decision-making processes.

What we did:

Maternity Services Review:

- Developed national and regional gap analysis reports
- Established minimum evidence requirements based on clinical priorities
- Developed reporting mechanisms to monitor sustainable interventions' impact

ISA Pilot:

- Designed, implemented, monitored and reported on pilot initiatives
- Managed expressions of interest process and facilitated procurement exercises
- Produced essential project documentation.
- Local/regional/national stakeholder and steering group management
- Led the development of case recording system, including Information Governance documentation

Our impact:

Patients (women, families, and babies):

- Receive support from knowledgeable, independent NHS staff for advocacy post adverse outcomes
- Benefit from recommendations aimed at reducing adverse outcomes and improving health for mother and child
- Experience unbiased assessment through independent Maternity services review, facilitating care improvements.

“ The Improvement Unit provided invaluable support, going above and beyond expectations. They were pivotal to managing and navigating some of the issues that arose, and in ensuring the key focus for the programme and the procurement remained on track.”

Rick Walker
Senior Programme Manager
MNISA Pilot





Strengthen System Partnerships & Collaboration

- Support the achievement of shared patient centred outcomes
- Provide a structured approach to reducing variation amongst system partners to enhance quality
- Establishing and strengthening provider collaboratives

Case Study: Integrating Cheshire and Stockport Breast Screening Services

Project/ aims:

NHSE North West tasked NHS Midlands and Lancashire's Improvement Unit with providing 12 months of project management and leadership support to complete the integration of the Cheshire and Stockport Breast Screening Services. Following a quality assurance visit by Screening Quality Assurance Service (SQAS) in February 2023, identifying 32 recommendations for the service and the involved Trusts to achieve full integration.

What we did:

- Close collaboration with the Cheshire and Stockport Breast Screening Service was initiated to enhance communication and engagement across the pathway
- The current integration status of the service was assessed, and the SQAS recommendations were translated into a comprehensive quality assurance action plan. Roles, responsibilities, and leads were assigned for each of the 32 actions
- Ongoing project management office and leadership support were provided to drive significant progress against the QA action plan

Our impact:

The successful implementation of the SQAS approved recommendations resulted in the establishment of a fully integrated service, streamlined governance, improved staffing levels, and the development of standardised procedures, ultimately enhancing the quality and consistency of breast screening services across Cheshire and Stockport.

“The approach has been very structured, with significant engagement across multi-disciplinary services and teams and has been coordinated and planned in a methodical and effective way to ensure everyone's time has been utilised most effectively. The Improvement Consultants have been a pleasure to work with and have become an integral part of the operational team in their support, understanding and drive for success. The overall improvement journey would not have been realised without them.”

Lisa Kirkup
Associate Director of Operations
East Cheshire NHS Trust





Strategy Design & Delivery

- Design and co-develop national, system and local strategies
- Stakeholder engagement to co-develop strategies and follow through to implementation

Case Study: Optimising Immunisation Services with a Hub and Spoke Model

Project/ aims:

NHSE Greater Manchester Public Health Commissioning Directorate commissioned NHS Midlands and Lancashire's Improvement Unit to undertake an independent service evaluation of the School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) and the School Flu Service throughout Greater Manchester.

What we did:

Our Improvement Unit conducted the independent service evaluation through:

Quantitative analysis:

- Analysis against service specification requirements
- Review of local vaccination uptake data
- Examination of quarterly quality and performance reports.

Qualitative research with key stakeholders:

- Conducted semi-structured interviews with service delivery leads
- Facilitated face-to-face workshops with providers to engage the wider teams
- Engaged with commissioners outside of Greater Manchester to identify best practice

Our impact:

We collated and triangulated the intelligence gathered as part of the independent service evaluation to develop an options appraisal, which led to:

- Defining the service function and ambitions
- Analysing the market context and developing an exhaustive list of options
- Developing a framework for the assessment criteria
- Conducting a SWOT analysis on the shortlisted options and providing independent scoring for each model option
- The options appraisal outcomes led to the recommendation of an integrated hub and spoke model, aiming to standardise practices across Greater Manchester and set a national benchmark for high-quality, equitable immunisations service delivery
- NHSE Greater Manchester has initiated the procurement process for this integrated service delivery model following our recommendations.



Supporting the health system to address inequalities

Exceptional quality healthcare for all ensuring equitable access, excellent experience and optimal outcomes

The Improvement Unit is committed to supporting the enduring mission of the NHS to ensure quality care for all. That means tackling the relative disparities in access to services, patient experience and healthcare outcomes. The NHS Long Term Plan placed tackling health inequalities at the heart of NHS goals for this decade. The Improvement Unit has prioritised this aim through focused development of the teams' core skills and capabilities to support health systems to achieve this goal.

We have, over the last 2 years, focused key skills and capability developments of the Improvement Unit team to support systems understand health inequalities challenges across their services. In supporting systems to identify where health inequalities in service provision exist, we jointly considered prevalence of conditions and mortality rates, behavioural factors such as smoking and diet, how people access care and what their experiences are as well as wider social factors.

A key finding of the work we have been supporting has enabled us to recognise the value and importance of engaging with service users who bring the voice of lived experience to the commissioners when considering how to redesign services that aim to tackle and reduce inequalities through improved awareness of service, access and increased uptake.

This increase in our own understanding of health inequalities has enabled us to develop support offers, tools and training which in turn is supporting NHS systems to better understand their own populations through the lens of health inequalities and how with supported targeted engagement new service models can aim to meet the NHS Long Term Plan goals of proactively tackling health inequalities.

A focus on supporting health systems to develop long-term approaches to tackling health inequalities will remain a priority of The Improvement Unit in 2024/25.



The year ahead 2024/25

Our new support offers focus delivery on facilitating and enabling delivery of the NHS Planning Guidance. We can help improve processes, drive forward prevention programmes and ensure impacts reduce health inequalities and disparities.

- **100 Day Rapid Improvement:**

The Improvement Unit uses tried and tested rapid improvement methodology to bring front-line teams together to solve a common problem, test ideas and implement solutions in 100 days.

- **Prevention Programmes:**

We have extensive knowledge and experience working with systems nationally, at trust, ICB and regional levels. We understand the challenges faced by ICBs and regions in consistently capturing and analysing data to support monitoring of activity, outcomes and delivery plans.

- **Development of Quality Improvement Strategic Partnering:**

There is a national emphasis on embedding a culture of continuous improvement across all health and care organisations. The Improvement Unit, utilising our extensive and broad skills and experience in improvement leadership, both in providers and commissioning organisations, can assess and diagnose your current position and work alongside you to implement a journey towards an effective Quality Improvement organisation, from Board through to front-line delivery teams.

- **Screening and Immunisation Programme Support:**

We can help with identifying small-scale interventions, such as a review of your current mobile screening site use, to large-scale system support, such as a full review of your screening Programme delivery across all integrated systems.

- **Programme Recovery and Assurance:**

We use our programme expertise and experience to rapidly gain a holistic understanding of the strategic and practical challenges facing programme delivery and have a tried and tested approach to reviewing programme planning, governance and the routes to achieving programme objectives. We support programme teams to develop the programme structure to achieve those objectives and work collaboratively with our clients to develop, agree and implement recommendations and deliver practical solutions to enable successful and sustainable programme recovery and assurance.



Contact Us

For more information about the work of The Improvement Unit, or to discuss how we can provide support to you or your organisation, please contact either:

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