

# Supporting establishment of a primary care network

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Midlands and Lancashire  
Commissioning Support Unit

## Background

Following successful application for funding through the primary care network (PCN) development fund in 2018, Chester East PCN was formed, covering a network population of 37,020 patients. The network engaged the services of The Improvement Unit in November 2018 to provide project management support to deliver their shared vision: “Working together to deliver high quality, innovative and sustainable healthcare for our community with commitment, compassion and integrity”.

## Action

We used an agile approach for managing the programme. This involved aligning the Workflow Optimisation project, which was already underway, to the Dressing and Visiting workstreams. An overarching project specification, detailed plan, risk register, identified mitigation strategies and communication plan were developed and established to provide a clear structure and visibility of the programme. This work was undertaken in parallel with providing support and expertise for development of the operational board structure. This included development of a Memorandum of Understanding and governance arrangements.

## Impact

- **The Chester East PCN project was identified by an independent audit on behalf of NHS England as an exemplar of best practice**
- **Using an 0365 platform to share project information and documentation has provided visibility of project progress and supported collaborative and agile working in the absence of shared file arrangements**
- **Dedicated programme support has enabled the work to move at pace, providing a structure for everyone to feed into and embrace**
- **CSU expertise within the programme management provided valuable support in sharing best practice across the network, using case studies to support current and future opportunities in collaborative working**
- **The programme has provided an opportunity to standardise the approach to future projects on a “do it once” basis, providing a rich library of accessible templates**
- **Creating a robust governance structure has enhanced working relationships and provided visibility and clarity on roles and responsibilities across the network**
- **An “out of box” approach has stimulated creative thinking in the design of a collaborative Dressings and Visiting service, focusing on a phased approach embracing LEAN practices and principles.**

**“Exemplar PCN, the way everything was organised from finances to workstreams was excellent.”**

**Charlotte Fisher  
NHS England on behalf  
of Mersey Internal Audit**

**“High calibre project management – MLCSU – game changer”**

**GP Dr Shana Tam  
Boughton Medical Group**