News release
Tuesday 14 December 2021

Pathfinder projects to tackle London's health challenges using the power of data at scale

Four pathfinder projects tackling some of London's key health challenges have been awarded £1 million funding to demonstrate how the use of data at scale can improve health outcomes, supporting delivery of the London Health Data Strategy.

The four projects will work in partnership with the NHS, the research community, and citizens in London over the next 12 months, to deliver measurable improvements in health, alongside developing the systems and trusted health data environments needed to link data safely and securely for service planning, improvement, and research. Selected following a London-wide application and interview process, themes of the pathfinder projects include:

- **Cancer pathways:** Development of a linked dataset to provide a clearer, joined-up picture of patient care along cancer pathways, with the aim of optimising use of hospital resources, and targeting improvements in care.

- **Asthma:** Development of a decision support tool enabling accurate diagnosis, improved prescribing, and targeted interventions to improve asthma care for the 600,000 affected London residents.

- **Hypertension:** Shared data approach to better identify groups at high risk of hypertension (a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke), and share best practice of tailored interventions to improve detection and control.

- **Pre-school immunisations:** Development of shared digital tools, mapping, and dashboards to support frontline GP teams improve vaccine uptake and reduce delays and inequalities.

These projects form part of a wider pan-London programme working to implement the London Health Data Strategy. This strategy presents a coordinated, partnership approach to safely join-up health and care data across the capital, and drive collaboration between existing initiatives to make London a world-leader in the use of data to improve health outcomes, provide insights and intelligence, and connect research and clinical care to create a genuinely learning health system.

Download the London Health Data Strategy here

The strategy was commissioned by NHS England (London Region) and London's leading research universities, and convened by Health Data Research UK. Implementation of the London Health Data Strategy Programme follows extensive public engagement as part of a London-wide Citizens' Summit, where participants mandated for health and care data to be consistently joined-up as part of a population dataset to support proactive care, planning and research. The public continues to be involved in every aspect of the programme, with Citizen Representatives appointed to the Stakeholder Board, and plans for further deliberative engagement with Londoners to shape ongoing policy and governance. This approach aligns with public expectations around continued involvement and oversight in the join-up and use of health and care data as a condition for building trust and confidence.

Professor Andrew Morris, Director of Health Data Research UK, who led the development of the London Health Data Strategy, commented:

"The London Health Data Strategy has been developed in line with public recommendations for how health and care data should be joined up and used to support service planning, improvement, and research. We have a responsibility to Londoners to ensure their expectations are met. As such, it is fantastic to see implementation of the strategy starting to come to fruition through this partnership programme and the launch of the pathfinder projects."

Deborah Millington, Citizen Representative on the London Health Data Strategy Programme Board, said:

"Having participated in the Citizens' Summit and helped to form the recommendations and conditions for the use of health and care data in London, it is great to see public expectations being delivered through the London Health Data Strategy Programme. I am committed to helping ensure that the public and patients are involved in every aspect of this important initiative, and in my role as Citizen Representative I will continue to have input and oversight."

Professor Sir Mark Walport, Chair at Imperial College Academic Health Science Centre, and Co-Chair of the London Health Data Strategy Programme, said:

"London has some of the richest datasets in the world, however data is often fragmented, inconsistently structured, and cumbersome to access. This limits the capability to harness this data to drive insights and health and care improvement. By bringing together the NHS, research community, and citizens in partnership, our vision is to join-up data from across the London system to create a trusted health data environment that will drive improvements in the health and wellbeing of Londoners."

Professor Ian Abbs, Chief Executive of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, and Co-Chair of the London Health Data Strategy Programme, commented:

"Londoners have told us that they expect all health and care organisations in London to join-up information consistently to support and improve service planning, and to enhance our research and development capabilities. This important programme will underpin and enable the consistent use of health and care data for these purposes, building trust and confidence around data use that, importantly, meets public expectation."

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

- For more information contact James Friend, London Health Data Strategy Programme Director, and Director of Strategy for NHS England (London Region): james.friend@nhs.net
- The London Health Data Strategy Programme is on a mission to improve the health and wellbeing of Londoners, and solve health and care challenges, using the power of data at scale. This partnership programme involves the NHS, research community, and citizens, working together towards a shared ambition to make London the world's healthiest global city.
- Partners include NHS England (London Region), OneLondon Local Health and Care Record programme, London's five Integrated Care Systems, three Academic Health Science Networks, three Academic Health Science Centres, and NHSX.

Strategic support is provided by Health Data Research UK. NHS Trust partners include Barts Health NHS Trust, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, King's College Hospital, Royal Free London NHS FT, St George's University Hospitals, and University College London Hospital. Academic partners include Queen Mary University of London, Imperial College London, King's College London, London School of Hygiene and Topical Medicine, St George's University of London, and University College London.

- Summary of pathfinder projects:

Focus: Cancer pathways
Led by: Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
People diagnosed with cancer can be cared for and treated at multiple hospitals in different parts of London. Joined-up information about their journey, or pathway, through the health and care system - from referral to diagnosis to treatment - is not currently available to clinicians or those responsible for organising and improving services. This can lead to fragmented understanding, variation of care, and inequalities in outcomes. This Pathfinder Project will develop a linked dataset to provide a clearer, joined-up picture of patient care along cancer pathways, with the aim of optimising use of hospital resources, and targeting improvements in care.

Focus: Asthma
Led by: North West London Integrated Care System
Asthma affects 600,000 London residents, including 240,000 children. Reportedly, London has low numbers of people receiving basic asthma care, with 72% of people with asthma in the capital not receiving the care they need. This Pathfinder Project aims to support ongoing improvement initiatives through the development of a London Asthma Decision Support tool (LADS) - a population health dashboard. At an individual patient level, LADS can support accurate diagnosis and improve prescribing. At a population level, LADS will help identify and target interventions to improve asthma care. This linked dataset will also be available at a de-identified level for research studies to create new knowledge about asthma care.

Focus: Hypertension
Led by: Clinical Effectiveness South East London, Part of SEL Integrated Care System
Hypertension, also known as raised blood pressure, is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and serious complications from COVID-19. Across London, 50% of hypertension is uncontrolled and 50% remains undiagnosed, with variation across GP practices and different communities. This Pathfinder Project will develop a London-wide shared data approach - or Health Data Infrastructure - to better identify groups at high risk of hypertension, and share best practice of different, tailored interventions to improve detection and control of hypertension across the capital. This shared data approach has the potential to be applied to other high-priority disease areas, such as diabetes.

Focus: Equitable and timely pre-school immunisations
Led by: Clinical Effectiveness Group at Queen Mary University of London
Vaccines protect children from serious infections. However not all London children are fully or equally protected: those living in poorer areas or from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to miss, or be late in, getting vaccinated. This Pathfinder Project aims to deliver a data-enabled quality improvement system that can be scaled across London to improve vaccine uptake and reduce delays and inequalities. CHIME - CHildhood immunisation system to IMprove timeliness and Equity - will provide frontline GP teams with in-practice digital tools, shared up-to-date dashboards, and maps, to help identify all pre-school children registered with their practice whose vaccinations are due or overdue, review each child's vaccination record at a glance, and access information to support conversations with parents. The project will develop shared learning on approaches to health improvement using data and will be an exemplar for assuring data quality and curation at source.