

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION



SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY DIAGNOSTICS: Lessons from Wood Green

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The recent budget announcement brought encouraging news for healthcare: additional capital has been allocated to increase the amount of community diagnostics available in local communities.

At gbp partnerships, we're proud to have played a key role in delivering impactful Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) projects located in existing community spaces such as shopping centres and community health centres.

When the service model, location, and design align, these facilities respond positively to those in greatest need, helping to improve health outcomes.

However, the journey to creating successful CDCs is not without challenges. They are complex projects, requiring careful planning and insights from previous experiences to ensure success.

To share what we've learned, we and our client Whittington Health, recently presented our experiences of delivering a CDC in Wood Green Shopping Centre, London.

By reflecting on this project, we aim to provide valuable insights for others embarking on similar initiatives.

In this special edition of Partnerships in Action, we highlight the key lessons and best practices that emerged from our journey at Wood Green, offering practical advice to inspire and guide future CDC projects.

Sam McCumiskey
Managing Director, gbp partnerships consult

The Wood Green CDC Journey

Delivering a Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) in the heart of Haringey's most deprived area was no small task. Wood Green High Street emerged as the ideal location due to its centrality and proximity to residents who were not accessing essential diagnostic services—contributing to poor health outcomes across the borough. However, finding a suitable site in such a busy urban area was a significant challenge.

With no viable sites or buildings available, attention turned to Wood Green Shopping City. Initial discussions with the centre's owners, Capital and Regional, were met with reluctance to repurpose prime retail space. However, through collaborative dialogue, the value of hosting an NHS facility became clear: a long-term anchor tenant with consistent footfall throughout the year.

Beyond location, determining the right mix of diagnostic services for the CDC posed another challenge. Commissioners needed to strike a balance between transferring existing services from hospitals and addressing unmet demand in the community. This made the activity demand difficult to quantify with certainty.



Funding and Budgets

The project budget was a moving target, the product of the Business Case for services provided relative to the cost of the space – capex and opex.

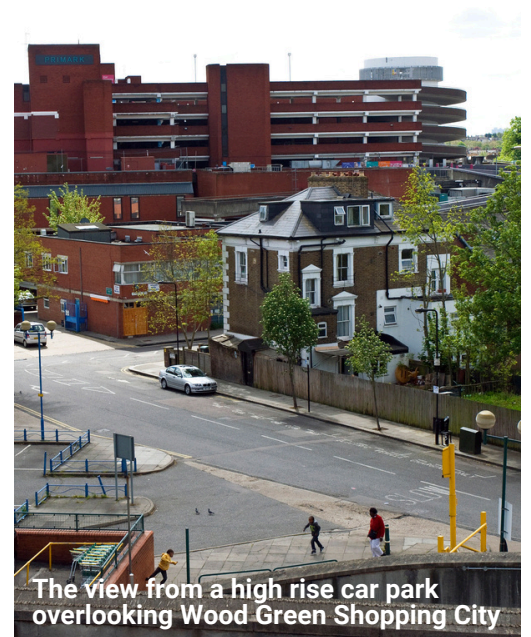
As the CDC programme evolved, NHS England adjusted and reallocated capital according to uptake and the progress of schemes around the country. Some fell away, some proceeded slowly, others proceeded at pace. For any scheme, particularly technically challenging ones, this was a complex equation demanding a highly flexible approach.

In this context, it was important that the Landlord understood and was on board with the commercial constraints. The working relationship with Capital and Regional was very much a partnership. Without Capital and Regional's active support, the scheme could not have evolved to realisation. This was recognised in the winning of the HSJ Partnerships Award in 2023.



The final choice of Wood Green Shopping City proved to offer more than just a central location. Its strong transport links via tube and bus, ample on-site parking, barrier-free access, and a large service yard made it a standout option.

These features ensured the CDC would not only be accessible but also well-equipped to meet the needs of the community.



The view from a high rise car park overlooking Wood Green Shopping City



The Mall Shopping Centre, High Road Wood Green.

The Wood Green CDC Journey [cont.]

The Challenges of putting the CDC in a Shopping Centre

The challenges were spatial and technical. The spatial programme was dynamic from the outset: the demise on offer from the Centre changed numerous times and was never a perfect match to the 'ideal' space requirement or configuration. To add to the complexity, the service mix evolved through the early stages of the project for reasons noted above.

So, we had to work dynamically with the Whittington Health clinical team to find solutions that were not perfect, but workable. There was a two-way dialogue between the art of the possible and the optimal service mix.

From a technical point of view there were also many challenges: retrofitting drainage below the floor slab to allow numerous hand wash basins and toilets to be installed; ventilating the facility to comply with NHS standards; finding adequate internal and external plant space; working in a live retail environment.

The Outcomes

The outcomes have been really encouraging. We know from the number of diagnostic episodes that have taken place in the first two years of operation that the uptake has improved considerably compared with pre-CDC numbers.

Information gathered from local GP practices indicates that the CDC is reaching precisely the target population that was identified. Observing the behaviour of attendees in the Centre, it seems clear that the setting creates a relaxed welcoming environment.

This positive image gets around the community, reducing psychological and practical barriers to attendance and positively impacting public health outcomes through preventing disease prevalence and reducing case mortality by reducing time to diagnosis. From a staffing perspective, there is a high level of satisfaction amongst staff working in the CDC.

The Wood Green CDC journey underscores the importance of flexibility, partnership, and thoughtful planning when delivering complex projects. It also highlights that the right location—enhanced by strong infrastructure—can make a significant difference in the success of a community healthcare initiative.

77% of People Seen

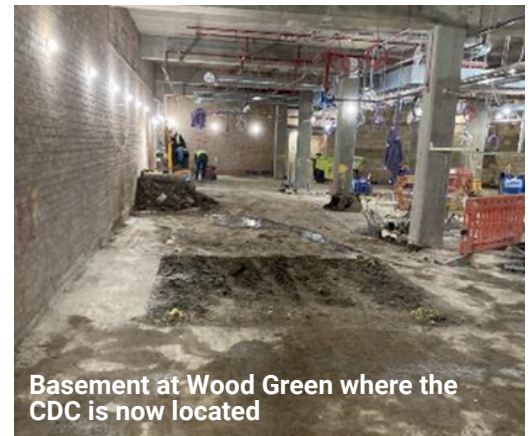
Live in the 3 areas of greatest deprivation in Haringey

80% of residents can get to the CDC in less than 45mins by public transport

Did Not Attend Rate is Better in the worst deciles of deprivation compared to a NHS Trust site

59,000 Increase in Footfall in Wood Green Shopping Centre over a 6 month period that can be attributed to the CDC

Representing a potential spend into the local economy of **£3M Annually**



Basement at Wood Green where the CDC is now located



MRI Control Centre

63,000+
Patients Seen
75,000+
Diagnostic Tests Performed



Krzystof Didek was the first MRI patient to be seen at Wood Green CDC

Top Ten Key Takeaways for Delivering a Successful CDC

As Community Diagnostic Centres continue to roll out across the UK, they bring the promise of improved accessibility and health outcomes for local communities. However, delivering these projects comes with unique challenges and opportunities.

Drawing from our experience with CDCs rolled out to date, in this article, Jonathan Wilson identifies 10 key lessons to help guide those embarking on similar journeys. These insights are designed to help you navigate the complexities of service models, location selection, and design, ensuring your CDC project achieves its full potential.

1

Informed appraisal of potential sites: be realistic about the key technical constraints that may make or break a potential site or scheme. For example, both the amount and configuration of available space; floor to floor height must allow for high volumes of mechanical and electrical services in the ceiling void; feasibility of installation of under-slab drainage for hand wash basins and toilets; availability of internal and external central plant space – this can be significant even for relatively small schemes; meeting structural and vibration requirements of large imaging machines.



Early access to Radiation Protection Advisor and Medical Physicist input where X-ray, CT and MRI scanners are under consideration.



Early engagement of Authorising Engineers and tenant's estates personnel.

2

Access and accessibility: consider parking, public transport, and service access. Shopping centres are usually ideal for these, but there could be showstoppers! For example, means of escape may not be suitable for healthcare use.



Early engagement of Clinical Teams who will be delivering services from the CDC.

3

Early engagement with the Centre Management on both leasehold and technical matters: you will need 'licences to alter' (LTAs) with both the Landlord and any adjoining tenants affected by the works (especially if beneath your demise).



Understanding of workforce implications: transferring staff to a satellite non-healthcare site can be challenging. There are economies of scale on a hospital site that cannot be replicated in a small satellite unit – for example an integrated imaging team operating multiple modalities at once.

4

Early assessment of fire safety implications: these can be critical to scheme viability. Make sure you have an experienced fire consultant in your team and access to the NHS Fire Officer.



Town planning implications and constraints: especially for new external plant, such as air source heat pumps which may exceed local authority noise limits.

5

Early structural assessment of floors on which heavy vibration sensitive scanning equipment will be placed.

Want to find out more?

Visit our website and dedicated CDC page here: www.gbpartnerships.co.uk/cdcdelivery