



# Case Study: NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board

Certificate of Consultation Readiness

Undertaken by The Consultation Institute

January 2023



**South Yorkshire**  
Integrated Care Board



The  
Consultation  
Institute

***“The confidence of having the backing of The Consultation Institute and the Certificate has been so helpful for us to give feedback to scrutiny from councillors and our own committees about the process”***

Richard Kennedy, Engagement Manager, NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board

## **Introduction**

NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) – formerly NHS Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) – was provided with “... a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve healthcare for people in Sheffield ...” with the potential for £37m in government funding to transform general practice across the city.

This included a consultation on the proposals to replace twelve GP buildings with four new health centres in the north and centre of the area. For support in this process, the ICB approached the Consultation Institute (tCI).

## **Background information**

The goal was to allow the provision of better care with more services for local people after the Primary Care Networks (PCNs) considered the existing GP surgeries to be unfit for purpose. Local GPs developed the proposals over several years, designed to address the limitations of the ICB’s current practice buildings. The ICB aimed to deliver on its promise to ensure high quality, efficient and cost-effective healthcare services for people across the city.

It was imperative that the ICB complied with the conditions associated with the government funding, such as adhering to the legal duties around involvement, and complying with timescales and strategic outline cases. Despite the concise timescale for the delivery of the project, and the challenge of occasionally conflicting conditions, the ICB was committed to delivering a robust, open, and fair consultation process that gave people the best chance to understand the proposals and respond.

In advance of launching their consultation, the ICB commissioned The Consultation Institute to deliver a *Certificate of Consultation Readiness*.

## **Benefits of Certificate of Consultation Readiness**

For Richard Kennedy, Engagement Manager at NHS South Yorkshire ICB, the consultation readiness review allowed the ICB to avoid challenges they had experienced with previous consultations, such as continuous requests for further information. “The breathing space that brought to us in the consultation has meant we can be proactive in reaching as many people as possible, and meant we were not defensive during the consultation,” he said.



“The confidence of having the backing of The Consultation Institute and the Certificate has been so helpful for us to give feedback to scrutiny from councillors and our own committees about the process we’ve been through, and the value it has brought. The process has also helped us break down some of the barriers in our own organisation ... particularly around assurance and decision making.

“The fact we could deliver in the short time frame was incredible.”

***“Andy understood the barriers and challenges that we were facing within the system. He was very clear about why certain things were needed and we had discussions about the best evidence to put forward.”***

## The Consultation Institute’s Role

The decision to approach The Consultation Institute (tCI) for support on the project was due to tCI being the “go-to trusted organisation for advice support.” Through discussions between tCI and the ICB, it soon became clear that the project required a more comprehensive service than tCI’s bespoke advice and guidance; it needed assurance and endorsement, too.

Unlike an Advice and Guidance contract, where the work undertaken can be selective and directed by the client, the Institute’s newest service, developed under a similar framework to its Quality Assurance programme, involves a review of all pre-consultation documents and processes. The Certificate of Consultation Readiness service allows tCI to form an overall assessment of the preparations for public consultation, and where necessary, makes recommendations on additional activities that it would expect to see in place before the consultation launches.

To award the Certificate of Consultation Readiness, the Institute had to be assured that NHS South Yorkshire ICB met the required standards of the Consultation Readiness Framework. Of course, this required some changes that the ICB were not expecting: “It was a challenging process.” Richard said. “There was key documentation that we needed to get in place in a short amount of time. Material that was included in the pre-consultation phase needed refreshing, like the key policies, easy-read versions, and our social media policy.

“There were even things that took me by surprise; I’ve learnt a lot about the detail that is required in consultations of this scale and complexity.”

The Institute deployed Senior Associate, Andy Wright, to act as the ICB’s primary advisor throughout the project; a ‘critical friend’ to discuss areas requiring further work, and to support the development of suitable responses. “Richard confirmed that, despite the unanticipated changes, the ICB felt “reassured” and “well prepared for the consultation period”.

“We wanted to make sure that everything was in place to have a smooth consultation,” said Richard. “We had specific questions around the Pre-Consultation Business Case, and specific issues around options appraisal and capital funding. We were able to get suggestions from Andy Wright on how to mitigate these factors.”

## Associate Role

Andy worked with two independent peer reviewers from tCI to provide the ICB with assurance that the proposed consultation met the required standards to be awarded with the Institute’s certificate of consultation readiness.

The review involved Andy considering extensive documentation and attending review meetings, highlighting areas for further work and discussing approaches. The outcome of the review was a certificate being issued to NHS South Yorkshire ICB with clear recommendations for further action in advance of the consultation.



Institute Associate, Andy Wright

Richard commented that the ICB’s team found their experience to be a “very supportive and collaborative process.

“[Andy] understood the barriers and challenges that we were facing within the system. He was very clear about why certain things were needed and we had discussions about the best evidence to put forward.”



## Certificate of Consultation Readiness

When you need something more comprehensive than Advice and Guidance, but do not want to go to the extent of full Quality Assurance, consider having an Institute expert review what you are doing and confirm that your preparations for consultation are in line with tCI's expectations.

The scope of a consultation readiness review covers all pre-consultative activities as well as preparation and planning and materials development.

Typically, Institute clients use our review services in the following ways:

- To examine a proposal or plan for flaws that could lead to complications or challenges
- To provide feedback on the quality of a consultation document or impact assessment
- To add value to an engagement or consultation plan

The requirements are structured into four key phases of activity:

- Pre-consultation
- Consultation scoping and governance
- Project planning
- Documentation.

A Certificate of Consultation Readiness requires the Institute to review all pre-consultation documents and processes to form an overall assessment of the work undertaken and prepared.

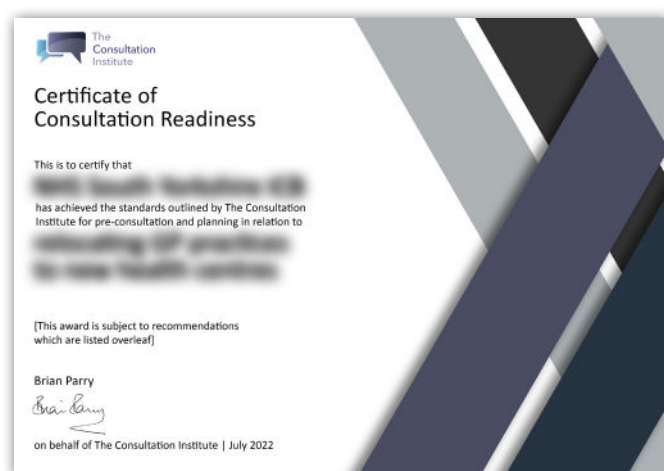
## How it works

The review is delivered using a lead Associate (Advisor), supported by other Associates as required for specialist expertise.

Day-to-day contact is with the Advisor, who will work with the client to ensure that planning and activities are in line with the standards expected in the Consultation Charter and Certificate of Consultation Readiness framework, ensuring that standards are understood and, where required, providing practical advice on how to prepare. An initial scoping meeting with the Institute Advisor would agree on the parameters for the inclusion in the review.

Before a Certificate of Readiness can be awarded,

there must be a peer review of the project notebook and supporting documentation. Two appropriately qualified tCI Associates will usually undertake this. Following peer review, and where there are outstanding actions/recommendations for further activity to be undertaken during the public consultation, a qualified Certificate of Readiness should be issued and include a list of actions required to be conducted during the public consultation to ensure the relevant standard is delivered. Where the peer review is satisfied that the standards have been met, a Certificate of Readiness can be issued with no qualification.



The client will be able to use the certification to address any challenges to the effective delivery of the pre-consultation, and if circumstances prove necessary, the Institute can make public statements to this effect. From experience, this service also helps to not only improve the quality of pre-consultation but also increases organisational reputation and helps to mitigate other risks.