



CASE STUDY · LUTON COUNCIL · 2023

Coaching Luton's health and care organisations to reach diverse communities

How practical, tailored coaching helped a hospital trust, a wellbeing service and a disability charity change the way they serve Luton's communities, in months rather than years.

3

anchor institutions
coached

8,000+

staff in the largest, a
40-person charity the
smallest

12

point action plan from
one charity

LGA

independently
evaluated



A small investment in terms of time of the coaching has quickly turned into some positive evidence-based actions that we can share.

Chief Executive Officer

Disability Resource Centre

The challenge

Luton is one of the most diverse towns in the UK. During COVID-19, the council's **Talk, Listen, Change (TLC)** research found that many communities felt overlooked or misunderstood by local services.

What the TLC research found



Unfair blame

Some groups felt blamed for spreading COVID-19



Barriers to access

Geographic, language and cultural barriers



Mismatched messages

Health messages that didn't land with communities



Cultural needs missed

Religious and cultural practice not considered



Workplace concerns

Minority ethnic staff unable to raise safety concerns

The brief

As part of its **Marmot Town** approach to health inequalities, Luton Council asked DiverseCT to coach three key "anchor institutions" and test a model other organisations could follow.

- ✓ Bespoke coaching for up to three anchor institutions
- ✓ Three realistic action plans, co-developed with each organisation
- ✓ A joint workshop on common health inequalities
- ✓ A report on barriers, strengths and lessons for others

Why anchor institutions?

Anchor institutions are large local organisations, such as hospitals, councils and major charities, that are rooted in a place. The TLC research found they can reduce health inequalities by:



Promoting safety and inclusion



Tackling bias in their services



Building cultural competence



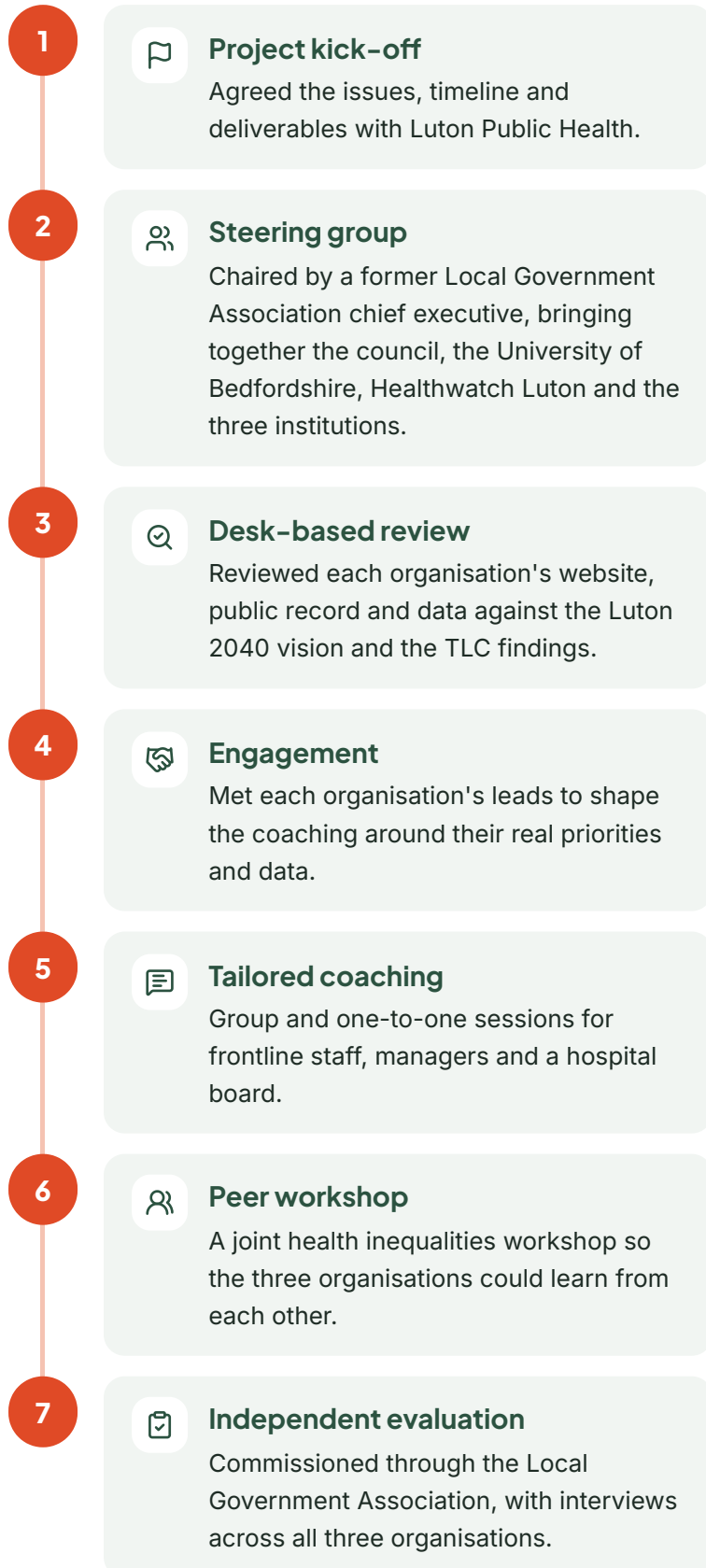
Diversifying their workforce

“ The coaching came at a good time because we could have just gone in with the blinkers on. So it's made a difference there and given us a swifter transition back into Luton.

Chief Executive Officer
Disability Resource Centre

Our approach

A seven-step approach designed to be practical, collaborative and repeatable, so other organisations in Luton can follow it.



Who was involved

- ✓ Luton Council Public Health
- ✓ Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- ✓ Total Wellbeing Luton
- ✓ Disability Resource Centre
- ✓ University of Bedfordshire
- ✓ Healthwatch Luton
- ✓ Local Government Association

Coaching delivered

Disability Resource Centre	3 sessions
Total Wellbeing Luton	2 sessions
Luton and Dunstable Hospital	Board + 1:1s
All three together	1 workshop

“ Having someone come in and do the workshop, it worked well. Read the room is the main term I would say and adapt to the audience.

Community Engagement, Outreach and Prevalence Manager
 Total Wellbeing Luton

Three tailored programmes

Each organisation got a different programme, built around its size, its starting point and the communities it serves.

Disability Resource Centre

Charity · 40 staff and volunteers

EDI maturity at the start: **Just starting its EDI journey**

WHAT WE DID

- Coaching for frontline staff, then managers
- Strategy session on data collection and confidence

RESULTS

- 12-point action plan, four times what was asked
- Data-collection script so staff can explain why equality data matters
- Staff language audit and redesigned forms
- Review of anti-discrimination practice and access barriers

"I've just done an internal language audit which was really helpful as we have a multilingual team... That's one of the actions that came out of the coaching session."

Operations Manager

Total Wellbeing Luton

Talking therapies and wellbeing · 60 staff

EDI maturity at the start: **Already investing in cultural competence**

WHAT WE DID

- Session on barriers and tailoring services
- Session on storytelling and engaging diverse audiences

RESULTS

- Community presentations rewritten to be relatable
- Multilingual leaflets and registration forms
- Campaign targeting young Asian women
- Picture-based sessions adapted for refugees with PTSD

"What they were working within was what they thought were boundaries, but for you (DiverseCT) to shift their mindset, I think that has worked really well."

Senior Operations Manager

Luton and Dunstable University Hospital

Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS FT · 8,000+ staff

EDI maturity at the start: **EDI plans in place, ready to go deeper**

WHAT WE DID

- Development session with the Trust Board
- One-to-one coaching with senior leads

RESULTS

- Board commitment to tackling health inequalities
- Equality and Diversity role reshaped to focus on health inequalities
- Missed appointments analysed by ethnicity
- Maternity outcomes prioritised

"Our starting point was to focus on the leadership of the organisation, the Board. The leadership team embraced the principles of addressing health inequalities through a development session with DiverseCT."

Associate Director of Corporate Governance



One size doesn't fit all. The smallest organisation moved fastest. The largest made its biggest shift through its board. Tailoring the coaching to each organisation is what made it work.

The impact



Better communication

Messages adapted to connect with diverse communities



Action plans

Specific plans to widen access and outreach



Strategic change

EDI goals built into organisational strategy



Cultural competence

Staff confident working with cultural complexity



New ways of working

New roles, community bases and services

What the independent evaluation found

- Coaching gave organisations "a safe environment for discussion" with external and internal challenge, so they could "raise questions that haven't been asked before".
- Organisations saw an unexpected "snowball effect": the work improved their wider services and was "perceived as enriching work".
- Staff became more confident engaging communities through trusted voices, and more focused on using data to find who they weren't reaching.

In their words

“ This has been a catalyst.

Deputy Operations Manager
Total Wellbeing Luton

“ Whilst always committed to the equality and diversity agenda, the support from the project assisted us in reframing how the organisation can weave inequalities into our objectives and service changes.

Associate Director of Corporate Governance

Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Recognition



Health and Wellbeing Board

Endorsed continuing the approach, with three more institutions lined up



Health Equity Town Conference

Findings presented at Luton's second annual conference, November 2024



Boards and elected Members

Final report taken to several council boards and Members

“ Prior to all of this we would have been too scared to do all of that and this has given us the confidence that we can do it.

Senior Operations Manager

Total Wellbeing Luton

Lessons for other organisations

The project produced a model other organisations can follow. These are the lessons that made the difference.



Commitment from the top

Progress was fastest where leaders owned it, as the hospital board showed.



Good data, confidently collected

Staff need to understand, and be able to explain, why equality data matters.



Trusted voices

Working through trusted community voices widens reach.



Tailor the approach

Size and starting point shape what works; one programme doesn't fit all.



Keep supporting change

Follow-up check-ins and document reviews help actions stick.



“Staff are just getting this idea that it's not just good enough to be nice to people.”

Chief Executive Officer, Disability Resource Centre

WORK WITH DIVERSECT

Want results like these for your organisation?

We offer tailored cultural competence coaching, EDI training, equality audits and Equality Impact Assessment support for councils, NHS organisations, charities and employers.



Coaching and training



Equality audits



EIA Review Service

www.diverse-ct.co.uk · enquiries@diverse-ct.co.uk · 0330 133 1173

Source: Talk Listen Change Anchor Institutions Pilot Coaching Project Report (DiverseCT and Luton Council Public Health, 2024) and the independent evaluation. Quotes reproduced with permission.