

# Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone

Press Release – 15th December 2021



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## **DIZ deliver ultrafast broadband network to future-proof healthcare for thousands**

Patients using GP surgeries in East Hertfordshire and West Essex have begun to enjoy the benefits of ultrafast broadband connectivity in their GP surgeries with the completion of the delivery of a £1.6m DCMS funded Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) project.

Underpinning the future of healthcare delivery, the 'full fibre' broadband network will also bring greater capacity and resilience to the local healthcare network across Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford districts. The experience of our local communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the critical importance of online connectivity for our GP surgeries and this investment will support even greater potential adoption of digital approaches such as virtual appointments and the remote monitoring of patient conditions in their own homes.

Following a 9-month delivery phase the Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) has completed the connection of 74 GP surgeries across West Essex and East Hertfordshire to gigabit-capable fibre broadband. The full fibre upgrade to these 74 GPs will also benefit thousands of residential and business premises located within a short distance of the surgeries, enabling them to access ultrafast speeds and make the most of our increasingly digital world.

The project was led by the DIZ in partnership with West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (WECCG), Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT), East & North Herts Clinical Commissioning group (ENHCCG) and Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire & Luton ICT Shared Services (HBLICT). The project was supported by Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council with additional support from Hertfordshire County Council and Broxbourne, East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford district councils.

Working closely with the health partners, as well as their respective communications providers Capita and Redcentric, the DIZ has delivered this network through Openreach.

**Cllr Alan Lion, Chair of the Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone and Epping Forest DC Member Digital Lead said:**

"One key aim of the Digital Innovation Zone is to make our place one of the best-connected places of its kind in the UK. The DIZ was very grateful to be awarded this funding from DCMS to invest in our health and care networks, and make sure that our area can be at the forefront of new ways of serving patients better. This project would not have been possible without the constant support of partners in the health economy and across all the five District areas, working closely with infrastructure providers in the private sector. I am very grateful for everyone's contribution and proud of the project that has been delivered."

**Cllr Lesley Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning at Essex County Council, said:**

"For many years Essex County Council has been prioritising health and social care and building connections in the digital sector that can drive real benefit to our residents. The DIZ GP project is ground-breaking in that it is ensuring world-class speeds are available to almost every GP surgery in and around Princess Alexandra Hospital. This gives us enormous potential to bring forward new proposals, services and ideas to serve our local people in ways that best suit their needs."

**Dr Rachel Joyce, Director of Clinical and Professional Services, Herts & West Essex ICS & CCGs, said:**

"Our organisation sees digital innovation as critical to driving up standards and experiences all the people we serve. The opportunities this new gigabit network will bring to innovate and wrap services around

patients meeting their individual needs are enormous. We will continue the partnership approach to make sure to grasp these opportunities that the technology is a means to serving real needs better, rather than an end in itself.”

**Dr Rob Gerlis, Chair of West Essex CCG said:**

“The DIZ project has been fully supported by the CCG and it is great to see it delivering a very high standard of connectivity across the areas we serve. This means our patients in west Essex and east Hertfordshire receive the same high standard of digital infrastructure as other areas to support their health needs, which is vital in today’s world.”

**Cllr Linda Haysey, Vice-Chair of the DIZ and Leader of East Herts District Council said:**

“The DIZ was established to bring the benefits to all our residents and to enable investment to be secured that would not have been available to smaller areas acting alone, the achievement of this funding and the build-out of this network, will really benefit health provision is a ringing endorsement of this approach.”

**Cllr John Philip, Finance, Qualis Client & Economic Development Portfolio Holder at Epping Forest District Council said:**

“Epping Forest District has prioritised great digital infrastructure to drive economic growth and, also, to provide the opportunity for innovation in healthcare. The district authority leads in Essex on full fibre connectivity and the completion of this scheme is another welcome addition in this drive to make us one of the best-connected places in the UK”

**Cllr David Holliday, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment at Broxbourne Borough Council said:**

“The opportunities to advance better health and care to our residents via digital innovation are becoming more apparent every day. However, without world-class infrastructure, these new opportunities and benefits cannot be fully realised. This DIZ project has put this world-class infrastructure in place.”

**Cllr Neil Reeve Portfolio Holder for the Economy, Investment and Corporate Strategy at Uttlesford District Council said:**

“Uttlesford District is committed to ensuring that we are not left behind particularly in rural areas in digital infrastructure investment. Our District has been a real beneficiary of this scheme, and we are looking forward to working with our colleagues in health, to ensure the maximum benefit of this investment is enjoyed by our residents.”

**Cllr Mike Hardware Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth at Harlow Council said:**

“The build-out of this network is really good news for the residents of Harlow and our local GP surgeries. The backbone of this new network is fibre optics and this technology was invented in Harlow with one of the developers winning a Nobel Prize for their innovation. Innovation that was invented in our town has now been deployed to meet the healthcare needs of Harlow people and people from across East Hertfordshire and West Essex. We will be working together with our digital innovation partners to ensure its benefits are widely shared.”

**Cllr Bob Deering Executive Member, Resources & Performance at Hertfordshire County Council said:**

“Completion of this project is really great news for patients along the Herts and Essex border, the build-out of this new network is another step in ensuring we are at the forefront of serving our people in the most efficient and effective way. The project has ignored traditional boundaries to focus in on meeting the needs in the best way and this will surely be a focus for future work of the DIZ.”

## NOTE TO EDITORS

Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) is an innovative cross-sector partnership made up of service providers and groups across west Essex and eastern Hertfordshire with the aim of making the area the best-connected place of its type in the UK. Developing digital infrastructure and greater investment to future proof local economic success and enable service providers to deliver better, more cost effective and joined up services to local people.

Further information is available at [www.diz.org.uk](http://www.diz.org.uk)

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