

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - August 2018

Getting to work on your priorities



At the start of the year, we asked for your input to help decide what we focus on next, and you'll be pleased to hear that work is already underway on some of your priorities. This diagram shows [everything we'll be doing over the next 12 months](#) and how you've influenced our direction. We're currently busy gathering views on mental health services and GP appointment systems. The aim is to highlight best practice that can be shared as well as to identify areas needing improvement. You can add your own feedback on either of these services via our online surveys. If you are a mental health professional there is also the opportunity to tell us about how you think work affects your wellbeing.

And the winner is...?



We're excited to announce that our [work with vulnerable women](#) around access to health screening and our [project to improve local care home websites](#) have both been shortlisted for national Healthwatch England awards, beating off stiff competition from 151 other local Healthwatch teams. A big thank you to everyone who contributed to both projects!

The project looking at improving care home websites was sparked by the experience of one of our dedicated volunteers, Tony Bentley, who struggled to find accurate information when searching for a care home for his mother. Find out more about [Tony's story](#) and about [volunteering with our team](#).

A handy guide to local services



When you're worried about your health, or the health of a loved one, the last thing you want is a long search for the services you need. That's where we hope our new directory of services will help. We've compiled listings for GPs, opticians, dentists and care and support providers in one handy booklet. You can [view and download the guide](#) online.

Giving young carers a voice



Young carers deserve the same rights as all other children and young people and should have access to the same facilities, services and support as their peers. That's what our team believe and we're delighted to have been awarded the [County Durham Young Carers Charter](#) in recognition of our efforts to include young carers in our work. Our team is working closely with [The Bridge Young Carers Service](#), part of Family Action, in County Durham, to ensure young carers' voices are heard and that they have a say in the future of health services. We also have a nominated member of staff who takes a lead on support for young carers.

Successful health check pilot in Shinwell



We've been busy working with Shinwell Medical Group in Horden on the next stage of our [project to improve access to health checks for people with learning disabilities](#). Back in 2017 we gathered views from people with learning disabilities about what stopped them taking up their free annual check. One of our recommendations resulting from this work was that GPs should consider offering health checks at alternative venues that may be less intimidating. Shinwell Medical Group agreed to carry out a pilot holding health checks in a community setting and we attended two sessions in December and January. Service users told us they felt happy coming to the community venue for their health check and liked the idea of a coffee morning/ social activity while they were there.

Spotlight on signposting



Our Information and Signposting team is available Monday to Friday on 0800 304 7039 to help with your health and social care queries.

A client contacted us recently because they were concerned they hadn't been offered a choice of hospital when they needed to see a consultant. We called the GP's secretary who confirmed the client had been referred to the hospital with the shortest waiting list. We advised the client they could change to their preferred hospital but there would be a longer wait to see a consultant. The client then contacted their GP's secretary to discuss in more detail and to make a decision that best suited their circumstances.

Did you know...?

If your GP refers you for a physical or mental health condition, in most cases you have the legal right to choose the hospital or service you'd like to go to. This will include many private hospitals. Find out more about your options on the [NHS website](#).

Local support

Cochlear implant group

WHAT: A group for people who have a cochlear implant or just want to know more about this procedure. A representative from Advanced Bionics will be there to answer questions.

WHERE: Bowburn Hall Hotel

WHEN: Tuesday 21 August, 1-3pm.

CONTACT: admin@ddsupport.org.uk or 0191 518 3358.

Coming together

WHAT: An afternoon of creative workshops and activities run by Durham Deafened Support. Including clippy mats, painting and mosaics. You can also just drop in for a chat.

WHERE: Horden Social Welfare (Miners' Hall)

WHEN: Wednesday 15 August, 1.30-3.30pm.

CONTACT: Call 0191 518 3358 or email admin@ddsupport.org.uk for more information.



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