

healthwatch County Durham

News update - September 2019

A message from our new Chair



Last month the Chair of our board, Brian Jackson, declared his intention to stand down and former deputy Chris Cunnington-Shore (above) stepped up to replace him. Chris spent many years working for the NHS and Department of Health before running his own consultancy company and now holds a number of voluntary roles in healthcare organisations and committees in the Sedgefield area. In a letter of introduction, Chris thanked Brian for his leadership and contributions:

"Brian has been an exceptional Chair, representing the board at the highest level throughout the county. He has led the Healthwatch County Durham board for almost four years and under his strategic direction and drive it has developed an incredible reputation... I am delighted to say that Brian has agreed to remain an integral part of the board and will continue to share in a number of initiatives. Needless to say Brian will be a very difficult act to follow, however, I will strive to ensure that the highest possible services continue to be developed and I look forward to working with the board and team to continue to maintain the highest standards achieved by Healthwatch County Durham."

The long-term future of the NHS - your views

what would you do?

The views of people from across County Durham are included in two new reports about the future of the NHS in the North East and North Yorkshire. Jointly published by ourselves and 10 other Healthwatch teams in the North East and North Yorkshire, the reports summarise what people in these areas have said they think is needed to promote and maintain good health in their communities.

- **NORTH report: Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham**
- **SOUTH report: County Durham, Darlington, Teesside, Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby**

Just under 2,500 surveys were completed by residents and around 300 people attended focus groups to share their thoughts and ideas. People said what they needed most to help them live healthy lives was “*access to help and treatment I need when I want it*”. Here in County Durham the importance of “*easy access to services which promote a healthy life*” was a recurring theme. People wanted more options to be available in their local and immediate areas that didn’t require excessive travel or unreasonable delays. The benefits social activities can have on reducing social isolation, particularly in rural areas, was also highlighted by people in County Durham. The reports will now be shared with the NHS and used to help develop local services for the future. Thank you to everyone who contributed their views via our surveys and focus groups.

Business collaboration builds crucial confidence



St Margaret's Centre in Durham is a support centre for adults experiencing a range of mental health conditions. They run a wide range of activities, programmes and courses to promote recovery and help improve and maintain health and wellbeing. We recently heard a local chiropractor was looking to re-cover its beds to fit with a new corporate style so we put the firm in touch with St Margaret's Centre. The Centre's upholstery team enjoyed working to deliver what the practice needed and used the opportunity to promote their craftsmanship and broaden their experience while developing their skills and building confidence.

(Photo: St Margaret's Centre, Durham)

For further information on St Margaret's Centre telephone: 0191 384 8100

Spotlight on signposting

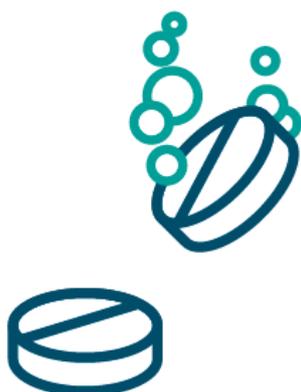


Our information and signposting team is available Mondays to Fridays on 0800 304 7039 to help answer your queries about local health and social care services.

One client contacted us recently because the optician she was registered with had been closed for several months. She was due a check-up and was aware she could register with another practice but wanted copies of her records due to retina photographs that had been taken in the past and the history of glaucoma in her family. We contacted NHS England on her behalf and discovered that all records had been moved to another practice. NHS England advised us that it would work with the client to ensure that an arrangement was made for her to receive her records. More information on the ownership of patient optician records is available from The College of Optometrists.

(Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7839 6000 or visit <https://guidance.college-optometrists.org/>)

Changes to ordering repeat prescriptions



From 2 September 2019 the way you order repeat prescriptions in County Durham and Tees Valley is changing. Community pharmacies will no longer be able to order repeat medication on your behalf - instead you will need to order your medication directly from your GP practice 7-10 days before your medication is due to run out. The local clinical commissioning groups say the decision to revise repeat prescription ordering systems has been taken in order to improve patient safety and reduce medical waste and it follows similar changes in other areas. If you are worried you, or someone you know, may not cope with the change the advice is to contact your GP practice.

Emergency support for unpaid carers

All unpaid carers who care for adults are entitled to support in an emergency to help make sure the person they care for is safe and their needs are met. To access emergency support the carer (or someone else on their behalf) should call Social Care Direct on 03000 267979. A duty officer will ask for details such as name, address and information about the person who is cared for. If no friends or family can assist in the emergency they will send a care assistant to provide care/support. This emergency support is provided by Supportive through the Short Term Assistance Service.

Nominate an NHS non-clinical unsung hero



The Unsung Hero Awards recognise and honour non-clinical staff, teams and volunteers who go above and beyond the call of duty for the NHS. The awards shine a light on the hard work and commitment of people who are vital to our health service but are sometimes overlooked. Colleagues, friends and family can nominate anyone they feel is deserving in one of 11 categories, including administration, estates, IT, volunteering and leadership via the Unsung Hero Awards website. **The closing date for entries is 30 September 2019.**

Mums-to-be, know your rights!

Don't miss out on maternity entitlements

Some people are entitled to more than just Statutory Maternity Pay, but there are strict rules and deadlines.

Ask your GP practice to put you in touch with our Healthier & Wealthier team - we can check your changing entitlements, and help with other issues and problems by phone.



citizens advice County Durham

Healthier & Wealthier is a free, confidential and in-depth telephone advice service for GP patients throughout County Durham.

We can usually call you for free within a day or two, and can involve our specialist "Help To Claim" team for help with Universal Credit and over 140 other organisations for other kinds of support.

- Checking for new entitlements now that a new child is on the way - **don't wait until your Statutory Maternity Payment ends!**
- Starting a Universal Credit claim during maternity, to avoid any gaps in your income when SMP ends
- £500 Sure Start grants for your first maternity, when you're receiving means-tested benefits or tax credits
- General advice on your rights and responsibilities with work, housing, money, debt, benefits and more

Call direct before 1pm on 0300 323 1001, or ask your GP practice to arrange an advice call

citizens advice County Durham

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If you would like to receive a paper copy of any of our Healthwatch County Durham reports please contact the office on 0800 3047039

References

- <http://www.stmargaretscentre.co.uk>
- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>
- <https://guidance.college-optometrists.org>
- <https://www.unsungheroawards.com/>
- http://www.healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk/sites/default/files/hwe_ltp_north_report_final.pdf
- http://www.healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk/sites/default/files/hwe_ltp_south_report_final.pdf



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