

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - December 2018



Our office will be closed from 4.30pm on Friday 21 December and will reopen at 9am on Wednesday 2 January.

Bishop Auckland General Hospital ward 6



Many people contacted us in October with concerns about the reported closure of ward 6 at Bishop Auckland General Hospital. As promised, we have continued to press County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) for clarification of their plans. Carole Langrick, executive director of CDDFT, has confirmed the ward will stay open while its future is being considered. The Trust has acknowledged the process could have been managed better and we welcome their decision to hold a public consultation after further discussions with staff. We are continuing to monitor developments and have shared [our guidance on public engagement](#) with the Trust in the hope this will help ensure people's views are really listened to in the public consultation.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contacted us with their views on this.

Update: Enter and View



Last month we told you about the work we'd been doing to gather feedback from patients at a number of GP practices across the county, including Lanchester Surgery and Meadowfield Medical Group practices. We are now pleased to be able to tell you that changes have already been made in response to some of the information we gathered. These include:

- a review of screens in a particular practice to make the reception more accessible
- changes to car park bays to make it more accessible for people with disabilities
- a named member of staff to take responsibility for the layout and update of publicity materials
- a practice employing more nurse practitioners to reduce the time patients have to wait for an appointment

All our [Enter and View visit reports](#) are available online if you would like to see what people have said about practices in your area. Or you can read a [summary](#) of what people told us on these latest visits.

One lucky winner ... and another to come!

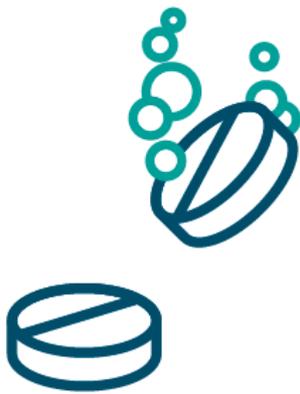


In September we announced that anyone who signed up to our monthly newsletter would be in with a chance of winning £50 in LOVE2SHOP vouchers. We had a great response and Mel Pounder, from Wolsingham, is our lucky, randomly selected winner! Mel (left) volunteers at Brandon Community Hall Clothing Bank so Faye, our outreach officer, met her there to hand over the

vouchers. Mel said she is going to give the vouchers to someone she knows who is in greater need than her, to help make their Christmas special. What an amazing gesture!!

******Don't forget: we are giving away a luxury hamper next so tell anyone you know who doesn't already receive this newsletter to sign up for it by Wednesday 19 December if they want a chance to be our next winner!!******

Improving knowledge of pharmacy services



Last month we attended the first meeting of the "Community Pharmacy Awareness Group". This has been set up by the Local Pharmaceutical Committee and Public Health in response to [our research](#) in 2017, which showed many people do not know about the variety of services pharmacies can provide. It plans to begin work with a campaign in 2019 to promote the expertise of pharmacists, the range of services available, the private consultation space available (also one of our recommendations) and the short waiting times. We will be helping the group to monitor the impact of this on public awareness.

Giving something back for Christmas



This festive season we're teaming up with Kidzone day nursery in Crook to make a difference to people who need a little extra help. Our team, including board members and volunteers, plus nursery staff, parents/carers and children, are donating items of food, essentials like toiletries, and festive treats. These will be delivered to Durham Foodbank in the run up to Christmas. For more information on how to get help from the foodbank if you need it, or how to donate yourself, call 0191 303 7559 or visit [Durham Foodbank website](#).

Have your say...

Our surveys of dementia and mental health services are closing soon. Make sure you don't miss this last chance to share your experiences of them and help make them better for everyone.



Dementia services

Are you a relative or carer of someone living with dementia? If so we'd like to hear from you. What works well in dementia services? What doesn't? And are there any gaps in services you think need addressing? [Share your ideas in our survey](#) or call 0800 304 7039.



Mental health services

Have you accessed mental health services in the last year? What worked well and what could have been better? If you could change one thing what would it be? [Fill in our survey](#) or call 0800 304 7039 with your views.

***** Plus don't miss these opportunities to have your say elsewhere....



Working together for excellent health for the local communities

Improving seven-day access to primary care
NHS Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield clinical commissioning group (CCG) are proposing to change seven-day access to

primary care services and would like your views on their plans. Primary care services are the "front door" of the NHS and include GPs, pharmacies, opticians and dentists. The commissioners' plans involve reducing the number of GP "hubs", which deliver evening and weekend appointments. A number of events are being held where people can find out more about the plans and give their feedback. A full list of dates and venues is available on the [CCG website](#). You can also give feedback via this [online survey](#).

Deadline for contributions: 19 December



NHS path to excellence programme

Earlier this year, the "[Path to Excellence phase two draft case for change](#)" was published, explaining the pressures and challenges facing local hospital services

in South Tyneside and Sunderland and why services must change. Now interested organisations and individuals are being given an opportunity to share any key evidence or ideas they think the NHS should consider when trying to find solutions to these challenges. This can be done via an online event on 11 December. Full details of how to get involved are available [here](#).

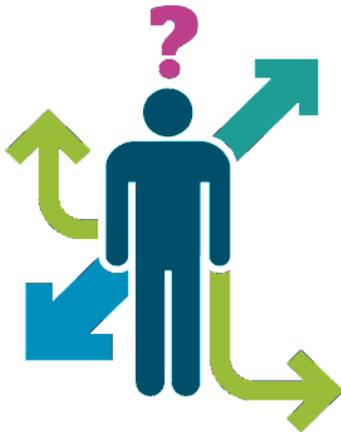
Deadline: Written submissions by 5 December for online event on 11 December.

Making changes together



Last month we attended the 21st parent-carer conference held by [Making Changes Together](#) - an organisation that represents parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities in County Durham. The aim of the conference is to help keep parents informed of the latest changes in education and health and social care. We were able to share our work with those who attended and would like to thank all those delegates who completed our survey on young people's transitions into adult services. This survey is now closed and we will share our findings with you in the New Year.

Spotlight on signposting



Our information and signposting team is available Monday to Friday on 0800 304 7039 to answer your queries about local health and social care services. We recently helped a client with reduced mobility who wanted some equipment to help her get around the house. She was unsure who to contact for reliable advice and so we put her in touch with Durham County Council's Equipment Advice Service. This offers free, impartial advice and guidance on a wide range of equipment that can help people get about safely and live at home independently. The service can offer advice over the phone or by email and also has an independent living house in Spennymoor where people can try out daily living equipment including walking frames, perching stools, kitchen and household gadgets, stairlift, bathlift, and specialist sensory support products. Contact the service directly on 03000 265 667 or by emailing equipmentadvice@durham.gov.uk

Dementia-friendly touch tour



The Oriental Museum in Durham is offering people with dementia the opportunity to explore houses and homes from around the world with a dementia-friendly touch tour. Visitors can touch some of the museum objects at the event on Saturday 8 December (1pm-3pm) and curators will be on hand to provide more information. Caregivers are welcome too and the event is free.

Call 0191 334 5694 or email oriental.museum@durham.ac.uk to book a place.

Mental health at Christmas



Christmas can be a stressful time of year for everyone. There is pressure to socialise, overindulge and overspend. The mental health charity Mind has put together some tips to help you look after yourself over the festive period, covering issues like alcohol, sleep and exercise (*we especially like the sound of dancing round the house to Christmas tunes to get our exercise!!*) [Read the advice here](#) and [find out where to get support](#) if you need it over the festive season.

Could you help develop NICE guidance?



The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is looking for lay people to join its "babies, children and young people's experience of healthcare guidelines committee".

It is looking for:

- two young people between 16 and 18 who have used healthcare services in the last two years
- a parent, guardian or unpaid carer of an infant who has used healthcare services in the last two years

Meetings happen around every six weeks for 18 months and you will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation as well as receiving £150 per meeting. Further information on how to apply is available on the [NICE website](#).

Deadline for applications: 12 December



Season's greetings and very best wishes for 2019 from the Healthwatch County Durham team. Thank you for all your contributions to our work and research in 2018!



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