

healthwatch County Durham

News update - July 2018

Speed-dating and surveys at our Annual Meeting



Breakfast, speeches, surveys and “speed dating” sessions were the order of the day at our annual meeting in Spennymoor last week. More than 50 people from public and voluntary sector health and social care organisations joined us at the leisure centre on 27 June, along with volunteers and members of the public. Our guest speaker was Jason Cram, Associate Director of Nursing for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, who talked about how keen the Trust is to work with Healthwatch to gather independent patient feedback. We also launched our [2017-18 annual report](#) and introduced people to some of the topics we’ll be working on over the next 12 months, including mental health services and access to GPs (see below for more on how to get involved in these). Sarah Douglas from Durham County Council Commissioning gave the closing address, complimenting Healthwatch on making sure patients and service users in County Durham are listened to by the right people. Thanks to everyone who came! [Read one attendee's verdict.](#)

GP appointment systems - do they work for you?



As a result of a public vote we are looking into the ways GP surgeries manage their appointment systems - comparing triage systems (where a GP calls you back for a telephone consultation) with the care navigator role (where trained staff signpost you to the most appropriate professional or service). Our aim is to identify good practice as well as things that could be done better and you can help us by sharing your experiences of accessing your GP. Simply complete our quick survey.

[Complete the survey](#)

Well done Paul!



Congratulations to volunteer Paul Stokes, whose hard work for Healthwatch County Durham was recognised at a Volunteer Celebration Event held at Durham Cathedral as part of Volunteers' Week in June. As well as the award ceremony, volunteers were given tea and cake and a tour of the cathedral, including the Open Treasures exhibition.

Mental health services - your views count!

Have you accessed mental health services in the last year? If so, we'd love to know what you think of them. Did you feel you got the support you needed? Were services easy to navigate? What worked well and what would you change?

We're gathering people's views to help make recommendations for change. Contact us at: healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net or call 0800 304 7039. And don't worry, we won't share your personal details with anyone else.

Good news for new mums



We were extremely pleased to hear the Royal College of Midwives commit to supporting women *however* they choose to feed their babies - something new mothers in County Durham have told us they want from local services. Last year we spoke to more than 200 mothers from across the region for our [report into maternity services](#). Many new mums who had chosen to formula feed said they had been made to feel guilty for not breastfeeding, or like they had failed. We recommended to commissioners that:

- information given to pregnant women about breastfeeding is realistic - including potential problems as well as the benefits
- midwives and health professionals should be more supportive of formula feeding, acknowledging that stopping breastfeeding may have been a difficult decision for women to take

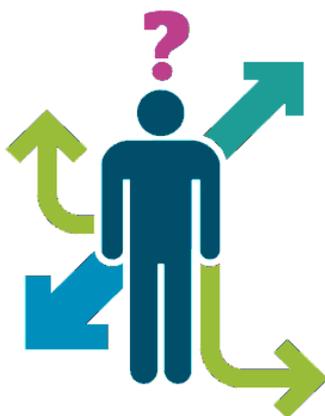
Call for better communication of NHS reforms



Earlier this year, we submitted evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee enquiry into Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs). STPs are areas where local NHS organisations and councils have come together to devise plans to improve health and social care in their geographical area. Our submission to the Committee was based on our [Independent Observations Report](#) and made the point that there was a lack of planning on how to engage service users and the public to get feedback on proposals.

The Committee's conclusion, which echoed our recommendations, was that the Government and NHS must improve how they communicate NHS reforms to the public. The report went on to say that, whilst there are examples of NHS and care services coming together to deliver better care, there has been a failure to consistently engage with local leaders in the design of service changes. [Read the Committee's views in full.](#)

Spotlight on signposting



Our **Information and Signposting team** is available to help with your health and social care queries. The team shared examples of their work with attendees at the annual event to give a flavour of the huge range of questions people contact us with. These included:

- a client whose friend was about to start cancer treatment and wanted to know if there were any concessions for travel/parking for such patients
- a GP surgery that called to see if we knew where a patient who had been bitten by a dog in Thailand would go for an injection (he had already had 3 in Thailand)

If you have a query - however big or small - you can contact the team Monday to Friday on 0800 304 7039 (Freephone).

Do you have an interest in palliative services?



County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Palliative Care Services are looking for help to evaluate the findings from its postal survey of bereaved relatives. The survey, called VOICES (Views of Informal Carers, Evaluation of Services), is being used to assess the quality of all palliative care services received by patients in the last three months of life. The survey responses have been analysed and the next step is to develop recommendations for how to improve service design and clinical care. A feedback event is being held to help with this on **5 September 2018 from 1-5pm at The Durham Centre, Belmont Industrial Estate, Durham, DH1 1TN**. If you have an interest in this area and would like to take part email your details to d.reed@nhs.net.

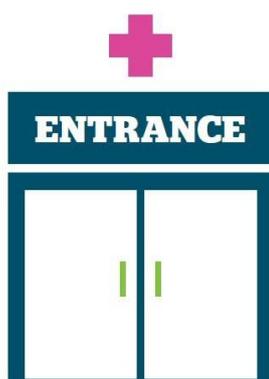
Being aware of baby's movements

Midwives in County Durham and Darlington are raising awareness of the importance of looking out for reduced or unusual baby movements during pregnancy as this can sometimes be a sign that something is wrong. Midwives will be on hand to offer information and advice at Dalton Park Shopping Centre on 8 July 2018 from 11am as part of a Smooth Radio roadshow.



Please share this graphic with any mums- or dads-to-be that you know.

What it's like to be an inpatient



The Care Quality Commission has published the results of its 2017 Adult Inpatient Survey. The survey involved 148 acute NHS Trusts in England and more than 72,000 people responded, including 506 admitted to services within County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. Participants were asked about the quality of their experience as an inpatient in an NHS hospital, covering issues such as communication with staff, privacy and involvement in their care. The results contribute to ongoing monitoring and Trusts can use the feedback to improve patient experience. [See the feedback for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.](#)

Local events and advice

Summer walks

WHAT: Get out for some fresh air and gentle exercise in the company of Durham Deafened Support.

WHERE: Various locations around County Durham.

WHEN: 5, 12, and 26 July, plus dates in August.

CONTACT: Full details of locations and dates are on the [Durham Deafened Support website](#) or via Alison on 07955 723851 or alison@ddsupport.org.uk.

Diabetes expert patient course - advance notice!

WHAT: A free self-management course for people living with diabetes. NB: The course will be facilitated by speech to text and transport can be made available.

WHERE: Various locations around County Durham.

WHEN: Mondays from 1.30pm-4pm for four weeks starting on 10 September 2018.

CONTACT: Call 0191 518 3358 for more information.



Contact us:

Healthwatch County Durham
Whitfield House
St Johns Road
Meadowfield Industrial Estate
Durham
DH7 8XL

Freephone: 0800 3047039

Text: 07756 654218

Email:

healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net
