

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - November 2018

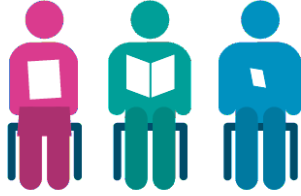
Smiling with awards success!



We were absolutely thrilled when two of our recent projects to improve health and social care in County Durham were recognised at the [Healthwatch England Awards](#). Our project to make it easier for people to find quality information about [care homes](#) won the "#ItStartsWithYou" award at the event in October. [Our work with vulnerable women](#) on the accessibility of health screening was also highly commended in the "Helping people have their say" category. The #ItStartsWithYou award recognises an individual or group that has worked passionately to improve care in their community and it was our volunteer Tony Bentley who caught the judges' eyes. It was Tony's own experience of looking for a care home for his mother that originally inspired the project and he has spearheaded much of the work involved. [Read more](#) about the work Tony and our team has done to improve information about care homes in County Durham.

Helping GPs to help you

WAITING ROOM



Our Healthwatch volunteers have been busy visiting GP surgeries in the region to help them identify points of good practice and areas where they could improve. These Enter and View visits are carried out at the request of surgeries themselves and help make sure patients have a voice in how things are run. Our latest [Enter and View reports](#) are now available on our website including Meadowfield Medical Group and Lanchester Surgery. GPs who would like us to visit their practice can contact Claire Cowell on 0191 3787695 or claire.cowell@pcp.uk.net for more information.

Bishop Auckland General Hospital ward 6



Many patients and members of the public have contacted us with concerns about the reported closure of ward 6 at Bishop Auckland General Hospital. Be assured we are taking these seriously and have written to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust to ask for more details, including an impact assessment and engagement plan. We will contact everyone who got in touch with us when we have any more news and will share any developments in the newsletter too. **Our team will be at the hospital on 7 November 2018 so do come and talk to us.**

Next stop: an event near you...?



We've been getting out and about this autumn, spreading our message across the county at events and community venues... and we don't intend to let a bit of winter weather stop our travels! So, if you are planning an event that is linked to health and social care and would like us to support it then please get in touch. Our new outreach officer, Faye Smith, would love to hear from you. Call her on 07395 790757 or email faye.smith@pcp.uk.net

A chance to win!

As somebody who already receives our monthly newsletter you already have your finger on the pulse - but we'd like even more people to hear about what's going on in local health and social care. Please help us spread the word by sharing this newsletter with your contacts. If they like what they see, they can subscribe to the newsletter themselves via our website. Anyone who subscribes before 16 November 2018 will be automatically entered into a free prize draw to win a £50 LOVE2SHOP voucher.



Support and inspiration for the next generation



Last month we attended the Young People's Future Event in Spennymoor run by [Investing in Children](#). We were really impressed by the number of services offering advice and information to young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their carers. These included [Durham County Carers Support](#), [CAMHS](#), [Rollercoaster](#) and the Dental Hygiene Team. We would like to thank everyone who came to chat to us and took part in our survey on young people's move from children's to adult services. If you haven't had your say on this you can still take part via our [online survey](#).

Last chance to feed back on key services...

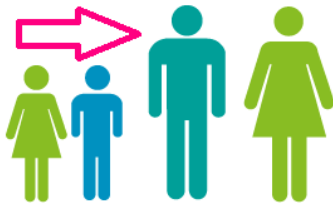
Our surveys about dementia services, mental health services and transitions from children's to adult services will be closing soon. Please share these links with anyone you know who has experience of these services. You can also ring us on 0800 304 7039 to share your views.



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?

[Dementia services survey](#)



Transitioning into adult services

If you're a young person aged 13 or over with extra care needs, or a family member or carer who supports them, we'd like to hear your experiences of transitioning from children's to adult services.

[Transitions survey](#)



Mental health services

Getting the right support at the right time is vital if you are struggling with your mental health. Have you accessed mental health services in the last year? What worked well and what could have been better? Tell us your experiences by completing our survey.

[Mental health services survey](#)

[Mental health staff survey](#)



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. One client contacted us recently about the difficulties they were having accessing the right mental health support. They had been discharged from a long-term support programme and a re-referral into the same service from their GP had been refused. The client felt their mental health was declining as a result and that they really needed ongoing support to continue living independently. Our signposting team referred them to the specialist [Rethink Mental Illness](#) Advocacy Team, which has been able to support them to access the services they need to ensure their mental health continues to improve. The client told us afterwards that speaking to us has kept them in control of managing their life.

Supporting people to speak up



[Rethink Mental Illness](#) is a specialist mental health advocacy team providing support to clients in the County Durham area who have, or perceive themselves to have, a mental illness - helping them to get their voices heard. The service is free and confidential. Examples of how it can help include:

- helping clients make phone calls and write letters regarding their mental health support and care
- attending meetings that clients may feel they need support at
- supporting people to make complaints about care

Referrals can be made by professionals or supporting organisations (including ourselves at Healthwatch) who have recognised that somebody needs additional communication support. Clients can also self-refer by calling 01388 766310 or requesting a referral form from countydurham.advocacy@rethink.org.

Have your say



Stroke services

County Durham and Darlington clinical commissioning groups and NHS Trust are reviewing the provision of stroke support in their region. They want the views of patients who have experienced a stroke and/or their carers to help them design a service that delivers care closer to home where possible and improves continuity of care. You can contribute your thoughts via this [online survey](#).

Deadline: 9 November 2018



Great North Care Record

A report exploring how people in the region feel about sharing their medical information has been published - based on information gathered at events we helped to organise. More than 300 people from the North East and North Cumbria gave their views at focus groups about the [Great North Care Record](#), including some our team facilitated in County Durham.

The [Great North Care Record](#) is a project that will shape how health professionals share information across the region in future - and our work to engage people in discussions means patients in County Durham have had a voice in it.

Read [the full report](#) or [join in an online workshop](#) on 7 November 2018 at 12.30pm to hear more about the findings and what happens next.

Stay well this winter: the flu jab



Research has shown that flu vaccines have reduced the risk of flu-associated hospitalisations by about 40% in adults in recent years. If you are aged 65 or over, pregnant, or have a long-term health condition, you are eligible for a free vaccine. This year the NHS is particularly keen to make people with heart and lung conditions aware that they are entitled to a flu jab as flu can lead to serious medical complications. Speak to your GP, pharmacist or midwife or visit nhs.uk/flu vaccine for more information.

New guide to social care and support

NHS England has created [a new website](#) for people who need help with day-to-day living because of illness or disability. The website explains people's options and where they can go for support. There is also information and advice for carers.



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