

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - June 2021

National Volunteers' Week

This year to celebrate National Volunteers week, which takes place from 1st- 7th June, we asked our volunteers if they thought that planting a fruit tree would be a beneficial and supported thing to do.

After this was confirmed, we approached Durham County Council to locate a suitable site and through working with one of the park rangers, William Peacock, we have organised the planting of a tree in the public Orchard in Wharton Park, on Thursday 3rd June at 1.30pm- keep a look out for photographs in next month's newsletter!

This will benefit the environment, as well as the public as they can enjoy the fruit that the tree grows in future years and it is a special way to celebrate the incredible work our volunteers do, here in County Durham.

Our Volunteer Supporter Claire Sisterson approached local garden nursery, [Congburn Nurseries](#), who have very kindly donated a fruit tree and compost to plant on the day (pictured below).

Our fantastic volunteers play a vital role in helping people have their say on local health and social care, and we would like to say a huge thank you to all of them who give up their time to help make care services better for our community!



Children and Young People's Mental Health

Children and young people's mental health was identified by members of the public as being one of their top priorities when it comes to looking at our local health and social care services.

Do you work or volunteer with children and young people?

Are you part of a school, college, youth group or club?

Could you help facilitate some fun and interactive focus groups?

We're looking for feedback from young people living in County Durham (up to the age of 25) on supporting mental health.

For more information, and the chance to receive up to £100 in Amazon vouchers for your group, please get in contact with Emily Hunter at emily.hunter@pcp.uk.net or call 07712653486



LGBT+ Survey: Last chance to have your say!

If you are part of the LGBT+ community and have used GP services during the pandemic, we would love to hear from you. Take our short survey to share your experiences [here](#).

(Survey closes on 11th June 2021)

Or, you can get in contact with us directly to have your say:

📞 Call 0800 3047039

➡️ Text 07756 654218

📧 healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net

Access to GP services report

We recently published our report into people's experiences of accessing advice, information and appointments at their GP practice since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Read on to see what we found [here](#).



Dental Update

Healthwatch England has this week launched new findings based on people's experiences of NHS dental care shared between January and March 2021. Prior to the pandemic, access to NHS dental care was an issue for many people. However, during the pandemic the volume of feedback about NHS dental care increased significantly, with some people having to wait up to three years to see an NHS dentist.

It's clear NHS dentistry is facing a twin crisis of access and affordability, as a result of which many people in County Durham are not able to access timely care.

Thank you to everyone who has shared their experience of NHS dentistry with Healthwatch England. Your feedback is part of new findings, which we are sharing with decision makers. You can read the summary of the findings and recommendations [here](#).

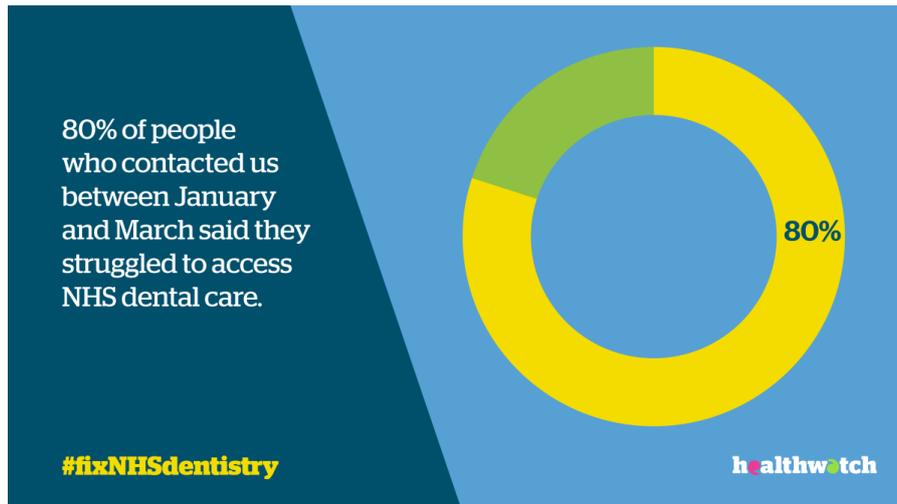
You can keep sharing your experiences of visiting the dentist with us, so NHS decision makers understand what would make it better. Contact our information and signposting team on:

📞 Call 0800 3047039

➡️ Text 07756 654218

✉️ healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net

A gentle reminder that dentists are currently still prioritising the vulnerable or those with the most urgent needs- it is therefore unlikely that routine dental care such as dental check-ups will be available at this time. Please ONLY visit your practice if you have an appointment and telephone to book an appointment only if essential.



Covid vaccination roll-out reaches major milestone in County Durham

GP practices across County Durham reached a major milestone last month after administering 500,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine across the county.

Chester-Le-Street Primary Care Network (PCN) clinical director, Dr Rob Bowron, said: *“Reaching half a million vaccinations is an incredible achievement...I’m sure I speak on behalf of all County Durham PCNs, delivering this historic vaccination programme, when I say without our staff, patients and our clinical leaders at County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) we would not have been as successful as we have been in making such a difference in the fight against Covid-19”*. You can read more about the success of County Durham's vaccine roll-out [here](#).

Now more than 4 in 10 adults across England have had both vaccine doses, meaning they have maximum protection from Covid-19. The NHS is continuing to urge everyone who is eligible to take up the offer of a jab at one of the 1,600 convenient locations across the country. When invited, you will be able to book at one of the vaccination centres, pharmacy or general practice sites that are available through the national booking service. By following a link and easy booking steps, you can book both jabs at the same time and can choose from a list of NHS vaccination sites.

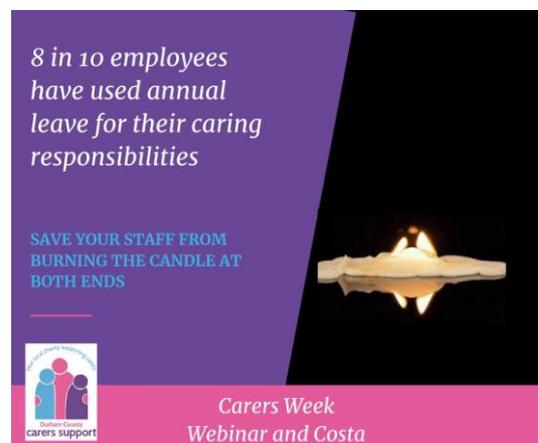
Text invitations appear as an alert from ‘NHSvaccine’, including a web link to the [NHS website](#) to reserve an appointment. People who cannot go online can call the service on 119 instead to book their jab.



Carers Week: Costa and Webinar

In aid of Carers Week, which runs from 7th -13th June, [Durham County Carers Support](#) are hosting a 20 minute webinar to help businesses support their staff who have caring responsibilities.

Calling all employers and managers-, this is an opportunity to become a more 'carer friendly' employer by covering 4 simple steps to support your staff who are unpaid carers- and you will also receive a Costa gift card for attending!



You can join the webinar on either Tuesday 8th June or Thursday 10th June, both at 11am. For the zoom link and gift card, please email fiona.kaley@dccarers.org

North East & North Cumbria Staff Wellbeing Hub

The North East and North Cumbria Staff Wellbeing Hub team are here and ready to help you. The Staff Wellbeing Hub webpages offer information about the Hub and how they can help all health and care staff in the North East and North Cumbria, including their free confidential staff helpline, wellbeing toolkit, helpful resources and a range of group and personal support offers. Take a look [here](#).

Their confidential helpline is open to all health and care staff. If you need to talk you can call them on **0191 223 2030**. The helpline is available seven days a week including Bank Holidays, from 7am-9pm.

You can also fill out an online wellbeing diary, which is a self-help tool which will ask you questions about your physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing each time you log on, to help you map changes in your wellbeing over time. Tracking your wellbeing in this way can help you to make sense of how you are feeling and identify the things in your life which help to maintain your health and mood. The diary also signposts you to further support for the things that you may be struggling with. To use the diary, please see [here](#)

When you're under pressure and at risk of feeling overwhelmed, you can turn to the Hub

- Staff Helpline**
A listening ear, and the help you find the support you need.
- Wellbeing Diary**
Help you to track your mood and understand what helps you stay well.
- Helpful resources**
- Support offers**
 - Group support
 - Coaching
 - Mindfulness
 - Music & the arts and more...
- Wellbeing Toolkit**
Short videos with practical self-help exercises
- Free Webinars**
To help you understand and adapt to what we are going through.

#HubsTheWord

Staff Wellbeing Hub
nhsjoinourjourney.org.uk

What to expect from Social Care Services

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has developed guidance to help you understand what social care services people can expect and to support you to make decisions about your own care.

NICE has set out six things you should expect from social care services:

1. You should be able to live your life with dignity and independence.
2. Your care should be planned flexibly around what you want and need.
3. You should understand what types of care are available, and the minimum care you can expect to have.
4. You should have control over how your care is provided and paid for.
5. The staff providing care should develop good relationships with you.

6. Providers of social care should ask you and your family for your views, and use these to train staff and improve services.

It's important that professionals involve you in any decisions about your care. They should give you clear information about your different options and listen to your worries.

They should also:

- Find out what matters to you and what support you need to live the life you choose.
- Give you information to make your own decisions, never assuming that you cannot decide for yourself.
- Involve your family and carers too, if you are happy with this
- Help you get your views across, for example using communication aids or by providing an advocate.

For more information from NICE please see [here](#)

Bring your voice to NHS specialised services

NHS England and NHS Improvement is recruiting to a range of Patient Public Voice (PPV) partner roles on groups with responsibility for the commissioning of specialised services. For full details of the roles and how to apply, please see [here](#).

These PPV roles offer a chance to have real impact in supporting the commissioning of specialised services across England. These services cover treatments for complex conditions like rare cancers, genetic disorders, and other rare medical conditions or surgical procedures.

PPV partners ensure patients and the public are at the heart of specialised commissioning - informing, supporting and influencing the work of Programmes of Care and Clinical Reference Groups.

All roles are considered *Expert PPV Advisor* roles and have an attached involvement fee which PPV partners are eligible to claim. Watch this [video](#) and read this [blog](#) to hear from Specialised Commissioning PPV partners about how their involvement has an impact.

The closing date for applications is 20 June 2021. If you have questions about any of these roles, please email england.voice-crg@nhs.net

Have your say on specialised services...



Apply to become a Patient and Public Voice partner today.



Have your say: Make a difference to the Education, Health and Care Plan

Have you recently gone through the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process at any stage in Durham? Found it hard to give feedback? Make a difference to the EHCP feedback process by getting involved and having your say.

[Making Changes Together](#) are looking for some parents to be involved in an online zoom session to tell them their views. This is to get better knowledge/feedback which will improve the systems for parents and young people, creating a better experience when going through the EHCP process.

They hope the zoom sessions will take place the week commencing 14th June 2021, and plan to do 3 separate sessions - 1 on a morning, 1 in an afternoon and 1 on an evening to give everyone the chance to have their say.

If you would like to be involved in making a difference please send your name and email address to info@mctdurham.co.uk or message them on [Facebook](#). More information is also available on their [website](#).

NHS and community power - join New Local's call for evidence...

New Local has launched a big [new research project](#) which will consider how community power can play a greater role in NHS.

As part of this, they've opened a [call for evidence](#), to gather insights from people with experience of the NHS, including those who work in and alongside it.

There is a growing challenge of rising demand for acute hospital services, and a long-recognised need to shift towards a more sustainable system of prevention. So, they are looking for examples of community power in healthcare, and ideas about how to create a more preventative, person-centred system.

Your submissions will inform a major report which they will publish later this year. [Here is a link to their launch tweet.](#)



Accelerator Pilot

The NHS has announced a £160 million initiative to tackle waiting lists and develop a blueprint for elective recovery as early reports show the health service is recovering faster after the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Indicators suggest operations and other elective activity were already at four fifths of pre-pandemic levels in April, well ahead of the 70% threshold set out in official guidance.

That was despite NHS staff still dealing with thousands of COVID patients, having to take additional steps such as infection control measures to keep patients safe and rolling out the largest vaccination programme in health service history. NHS England is now seeking to accelerate the recovery by trialling new ways of working in a dozen areas and five specialist children's hospitals.

The 'elective accelerators' will each receive a share of £160 million along with additional support to implement and evaluate innovative ways to increase the number of elective operations they deliver. For further information, including next steps, please see [here](#)



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