

Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS
Relevant extracts from the White Paper (12/07/10) relating to the
Patient and Public Voice & Healthwatch

Patient and public voice

2.24 We will strengthen the collective voice of patients, and we will bring forward provisions in the forthcoming Health Bill to create HealthWatch England, a new independent consumer champion within the Care Quality Commission. Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will become the local HealthWatch, creating a strong local infrastructure, and we will enhance the role of local authorities in promoting choice and complaints advocacy, through the HealthWatch arrangements they commission.

2.25 We will also look at existing mechanisms, including relevant legislation, to ensure that public engagement is fully effective in future, and that services meet the needs of neighbourhoods.

2.26 All sources of feedback, of which complaints are an important part, should be a central mechanism for providers to assess the quality of their services. We want to avoid the experience of Mid-Staffordshire, where patient and staff concerns were continually overlooked while systemic failure in the quality of care went unchecked. Building on existing complaints handling structures, we will strengthen arrangements for information sharing. Local HealthWatch will also have the power to recommend that poor services are investigated.

The role of HealthWatch

At local level:

- Local HealthWatch organisations will ensure that the views and feedback from patients and carers are an integral part of local commissioning across health and social care;
- Local authorities will be able to commission local HealthWatch or HealthWatch England to provide advocacy and support, helping people access and make choices about services, and supporting individuals who want to make a complaint. In particular, they will support people who lack the means or capacity to make choices; for example, helping them choose which General Practice to register with;
- Local HealthWatch will be funded by and accountable to local authorities, and will be involved in local authorities' new partnership functions, described in chapter 4. To reinforce local accountability, local authorities will be responsible for ensuring that local HealthWatch are operating effectively, and for putting in place better arrangements if they are not; and
- Local HealthWatch will provide a source of intelligence for national HealthWatch and will be able to report concerns about the quality of providers, independently of the local authority.

At national level:

- HealthWatch England will provide leadership, advice and support to local HealthWatch, and will be able to provide advocacy services on their behalf if the local authority wishes;
- HealthWatch England will provide advice to the Health and Social Care Information Centre on the information which would be of most use to patients to facilitate their choices about their care;
- HealthWatch England will provide advice to the NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor and the Secretary of State; and
- Based on information received from local HealthWatch and other sources, HealthWatch England will have powers to propose CQC investigations of poor services.

The Government will shortly publish more detailed documents seeking views on commissioning for patients (the implementation of the NHS Commissioning Board and GP consortia); local democratic legitimacy in health; freeing providers and economic regulation; and the NHS outcomes framework. The report of the arm's-length bodies review will also be published shortly. Later this year, the Government will also publish for consultation a NHS information strategy, and a document on the move to a provider-led education and training system.

6.5 To support the ownership of the strategy within the NHS and to inform the implementation of this White Paper, the Department of Health will carry out a series of consultation activities with: patients, their representative groups and the public; NHS staff, their representative and professional bodies; local government; and the voluntary, social enterprise and independent sectors. This will run in parallel to the formal consultation on the proposals above.

Many of the changes in this White Paper require primary legislation. The Queen's Speech included a major Health Bill in the legislative programme for this first Parliamentary session. The Government will introduce this in the autumn. The principal legislative reforms will include:

-establishing **HealthWatch** as a statutory part of the Care Quality Commission to champion services users and carers across health and social care, and turning Local Involvement Networks into local Healthwatch.

We are clear about the coherent strategy, and we will engage people in understanding this and its implications. We are consulting on how best to implement these changes. In particular, the Department would welcome comments on the implementation of the proposals requiring primary legislation, and will publish a response to the views raised on the White Paper and the associated papers, prior to the introduction of the Bill. Comments should be sent by 5th October 2010, to: NHSWhitePaper@dh.gsi.gov.uk

or:

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<p>Majority of reforms come into effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NHS Commissioning Board fully established• New local authority health and wellbeing boards in place• Limits on the ability of the Secretary of State to micromanage and intervene• Public record of all meetings between the Board and the Secretary of State• Public Health Service in place, with ring-fenced budget and local health improvement led by Directors of Public Health in local authorities• NICE put on a firmer statutory footing• HealthWatch established• Monitor established as economic regulator	<p>April 2012</p>
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To view the White Paper in full, visit:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@p/s/documents/digitalasset/dh_117352.pdf