

HealthWatch update



With less than a year to go before our LINK evolves into HealthWatch Halton we want to keep you updated on what is happening.

In 2010 the Government published its White Paper on the NHS reforms 'Equity and Excellence' with its promise of a new and forward-looking NHS in which patients come first and are listened to –

'No decision about me without me'

It included ideas for the new national HealthWatch England (to give an independent national voice for patients and the public) and also a local HealthWatch in each local authority area of England, to be the independent consumer champion for users of health and social care, a sort of Citizens Advice Bureau for Health & Social Care.

HealthWatch will evolve from and continue the LINK function of:

- Capturing people's views and experiences to influence the policy, planning, commissioning and delivery of health and social care.

In addition it will:

- Provide information and advice to help people to access and make choices about services.
- Be the point of access to independent complaints advocacy to support people if they need to complain about NHS services.

The key differences between the LINK function as it is now and the function of Local HealthWatch in the future are:

LINK influences how services are planned and run. **Local HealthWatch** will participate in decision making by having a place on newly established Health and Wellbeing Boards.

LINK works with communities to listen to their views and focus on the voices of public and patients in Halton. **Local HealthWatch** will do this and more. It will help and support individuals as well.

LINK works with the people who plan and run services in Halton. **Local HealthWatch** will have national support from 'HealthWatch England' who will have national voice and influence informed by local HealthWatch.

We need you to



We are looking for volunteers to join the Halton LINK Enter and View team.

LINKs can send volunteers to visit certain health and adult social care services to see how they are run. This is called 'enter and view' and Halton LINK has a team of enter and view visitors (known as 'authorised representatives' in the legislation) to do this.

We don't use the power to enter and view as a tool to criticise health and adult social care services but more as an opportunity to help services improve and meet the needs of the people who use them.

Enter and view visitors have to be recruited, trained and have a criminal records bureau (CRB) check before carrying out a visit on behalf of Halton LINK.

If you're interested in becoming a member of our Enter & View team call 01928 592405 and speak to Dave Wilson, or email dwilson@haltonlink.org.uk





How to Contact Us

If you need to contact the LINK to give us your views on local health and social care services you can do it in a number of ways.

Email: info@haltonlink.org.uk

Tel: 01928 592405

or call in to see us at Sefton House
Public Hall Street, Runcorn WA7 1NG

Get checked, gets results! Cancer confidence increases across Halton and St Helens!



Local knowledge in recognising the key symptoms of breast, bowel and lung cancer is increasing throughout Halton and St Helens according to new research carried out by the NHS Health Improvement Team.

Breast, bowel and lung cancer remains our biggest causes of early death from cancer in the two boroughs. In 2008 an early detection programme called Get checked was launched to help publicise the key symptoms of breast, bowel and lung cancer to local people by getting them to see their GP.

In January 2011 a visually renewed and refreshed Get checked campaign hit the streets of Halton and St Helens with a key focus of encouraging the public to speak up about any breast, bowel or lung cancer symptoms they may have and not to be embarrassed about seeing their doctor.

Following the Get checked refresh at the start of this year, a number of local surveys took place at the end of September 2011 in which a sample of 400 people were questioned throughout Widnes, Runcorn and St Helens.

The results revealed that almost 6 out of 10 people (59%) now have the confidence to spot the main signs and symptoms of breast, bowel and lung cancers.

In addition to this, 74% of the sample questioned would show no hesitation in seeing their GP within a week if they had any of the main suspicious breast, bowel and lung cancer symptoms. 9 out of 10 (96%) of the 400 people surveyed agree that cancer can be treated successfully if diagnosed early enough.

For more information visit the Health Improvement team website at

<http://www.healthimprovementteam.co.uk/>

The Limbless Association



The Limbless Association is a national charity that seeks to help individuals of all ages to achieve maximum mobility and independence; whether at home in hospital, education or employment.

It was established as a charity in 1983. Since then it has grown to become the leading UK charity for people with limb-loss, with approximately 2,000 members in the UK.

The Association provides free and impartial information and support to people of all ages who are without one or more limbs. It also plays a leading role in making representations on matters of policy and legality to Government Departments, Local Authorities & Health Authorities and is widely consulted by such departments on relevant issues.

It also has links to local User and Support Groups who meet regularly and provide a network for local amputees to meet and discuss any problems or issues they may be experiencing.

For more information, email enquiries@limbless-association.org or visit www.limbless-association.org

Searching for a NHS Dentist?



Each month we publish a list of local dentists, giving details of those who are taking on new patients and how long the waiting time is for the next NHS routine appointment.

The list can be downloaded from our website, www.haltonlink.org.uk, or a hard copy can be obtained by calling the LINK Support Team on 01928 592405

LINK Update

Here's just a little taster of what's been happening since our last newsletter:

Our Mental Health working group put forward a report and recommendations to the 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust on ways services can be improved.

Our enter & view teams have visited another two local care homes. Copies of the reports are available to download from our website.

Membership of the Halton LINK has increased to 917.

We attended the 'Dignity Matters' Follow-up event organised by the Halton Dignity Champions Network.

We've attended various community group meetings in Hale, Widnes and Runcorn to give people the opportunity to have their say.

Over 100 people attended a joint information event we organised with the Halton Carers' Centre on 3rd October which covered:

- *Welfare reforms*
- *Health & Wellbeing boards*
- *DLA update*
- *Wills & Probate*
- *Carers Short breaks*
- *Redesign of services for Adults with learning disabilities*

LINK reps have attended meetings of Whiston Hospital PSEC*, Warrington Hospital PEG**, 5 Boroughs NHS Trust, Halton Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board, Carers Strategy Group and the Dementia Strategy Group to name a few.

We've also taken part in a review of the Care Quality Commission's new look inspection reports.

* Patient Safety & Experience Committee

** Patient Experience Group

LINK Evaluation Survey and Focus Group



Many thanks to the Halton LINK members who responded to our recent LINK evaluation survey.

Members were given a series of positive statements about the LINK and asked whether they 'agreed', 'disagreed', 'didn't know' or 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the statements. Across a series of questions 86.6% of members 'agreed' with the statements, 8.4% 'neither agree nor disagree', 3.3% answered 'don't know' while 2.7% 'disagreed'.

A small focus group meeting of LINK members was

also arranged by Halton Borough Council. This took a more in-depth look at the survey, but with very similar positive results.

The results and feedback from the survey will be used by our Transition Group and the local authority to see how well the LINK is working and where it needs further development in the run up to the start of HealthWatch in October 2012.

Help shape future specialised surgical services for morbidly obese patients across the North West

Patients, carers and the wider public are being asked to help develop future services for people requiring specialised NHS weight loss surgery across the North West.

Specialised commissioners, working on behalf of the region's primary care trusts, want to hear people's views about the kind of services which should be offered to people with morbid obesity, and whether or not certain patients should be prioritised above others.

They also want to know whether patients undergoing weight loss surgery (known as bariatric surgery) would be willing to travel further to have their operation at a centre in the North West, as long as they could have their follow-up appointments in settings nearer their homes.

A web-based survey has been set up to encourage people to have their say.

The survey is open until 30th December 2011 and can be accessed via

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NYJ5PX3>



Jon Develing, Chief Officer of the North West Specialised Commissioning Team, said:

"It is really important that we hear from as many people as possible during this exercise so that, as commissioners of services, we can better understand the issues which matter to this specific group of patients, and can seek out prospective service providers who can meet those needs."



If you need this newsletter in a different format, e.g. CD or you would like a larger print version then please contact us.



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