

Press Release - 09.01.17

NHS Organisations undertake extensive community engagement on the future of hospital services - Investing in Children

Investing in Children CIC based in Durham carried out two 'Agenda Days' before Christmas, to involve young people in the NHS Better Health Programme, to find out what they think about plans for acute hospital changes in County Durham, Darlington and Teesside.

An Agenda Day is an adult free space, where adults don't take part in the debate, so that children and young people are free to discuss issues without adult influence. This was achieved by using young people as facilitators.

21 Young People aged 13-17 attended a session in Stanley and 15 Young People age 10-19 attended 2 sessions, one in Bishop Auckland and one in Easington. All sessions took place in October 2016.

The Better Health Programme, which is a group of local NHS organisations lead by around 100 clinicians, is looking to bring improvements to patients in life-threatening situations to ensure they are cared for in a hospital that has specialist doctors and experienced teams of staff available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Participants were asked: What is good or bad about specialist hospitals?, What type of health services would you like to be able to access in your local community?, How can we get people to use the community services rather than go to a hospital?, What is good about reducing Paediatric wards and what is bad about it?, What is important when leaving the hospital?, Is it better to get the best possible care and have to travel further or have services closer but not necessarily specialist services?

Key feedback included the following comments:

- One group decided it was better to travel further for the specialist services in order to receive the best possible care.
- Another group decided that specialist care was more important but it would be better to get specialist care in every hospital.
- Some felt more attention should be paid to young people and teenagers
- Some had concerns such as it could take longer to access care in an emergency, waiting times may increase and the specialist hospital could be too far away.
- Some felt access to best possible care is worth the extra travel.

Dr Jonathan Smith, Clinical Chair for Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield Clinical Commissioning Group, and one of around 100 clinicians leading the NHS Better Health Programme said: "Listening to the views of young people in our area is extremely valuable and all feedback is passed on to the Programme Board to consider when developing future healthcare plans. Following the initial sessions in October, and seeing the reports produced by the young people, I have visited Investing in Children in January to meet with the young people who facilitated the sessions. This provided an opportunity for me to answer some of the queries raised and offer some reassurance that the programme is looking at issues such as transport, access and availability of specialist staff as key considerations in the plans."

Chris Affleck, Project Worker at Investing in Children in Durham said: "We received a range of views from the 36 people involved, who regularly meet up to discuss health related issues affecting their local population. Investing in Children is committed to ensuring that children and young people have a say in decisions that affected them, and so we greatly welcome this and any future opportunities to get involved in the Better Health Programme. Having Dr Smith come along this month to provide feedback has resulted in a video which we can share with the young people involved, and which also could be useful to other people interested in finding out more about the programme could affect them."



*The NHS in Darlington,
Durham and Tees*

The full Investing in Children reports are available for download from www.nhsbetterhealth.org.uk.

To find out more about the NHS Better Health Programme and how you can get involved, please email necsu.betterhealthprogramme@nhs.net.

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Notes to Editor

What does our local NHS do well?
Where can we improve?

The Better Health programme is about providing care of a consistently high standard, and in the right place at the right time.

Experienced Clinical staff from the local NHS – including hospital consultants and GPs - have been looking at how we do this, in discussion with their colleagues, stakeholders and patient representatives.

They believe that people with serious or life threatening needs should be treated in specialist centres with the very best expertise and facilities. This will maximise their chances of survival and a good recovery – even if it means going past the nearest hospital.

For more information on the Better Health Programme please contact:

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