

Press Release - 09.01.17

NHS Organisations undertake extensive community engagement on the future of hospital services - 100 conversations carried out with local groups

Voluntary and community sector organisations have held over 100 conversations with local groups to find out what they think about plans for acute hospital changes in County Durham, Darlington and Teesside.

The NHS Better Health Programme, in partnership with the Voluntary Organisations' Network North East (VONNE) has been working with local and regional voluntary sector partners, to complete a 3 month engagement exercise. This has involved a series of conversations with smaller voluntary and community sector groups and organisations across the area. The work will enable the Better Health Programme to build a full picture of the needs of all parts of the community, and in particular groups that experience health and wellbeing inequalities and enable members of those groups and communities to influence the health services they use.

The Better Health Programme, which is a group of local NHS organisations led 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.

Groups who have been engaged include those involved with carers, children, families and young people, disabled people, gender specific groups, LGBT, those with long term conditions, older people, young people and people of particular ethnic / racial origins.

Participants were asked: Do you understand the issues raised?, What effect do you think it will have for your hospital services?, What effect do you think it will have for your GP and community services?, What impact (positive or negative) do you think changes to hospital, GP and community services might have on you, your family, carers and your wider local community?.

A partnership between local NHS clinical commissioning groups and foundation trusts

Key feedback across all groups was around the following main themes:

- Some were concerned about travel and transport including how changes might affect the ambulance service. The distances for families and friends visiting patients, as well as the cost and availability of car parking were also discussed.
- The pressure on GP services and social care was raised by some participants, who said they felt the situation could worsen if there was increased care closer to home.
- It was felt that improved communication was needed across health and social care.
- Some expressed the view that it is important to have the right mix of staff skills.
- Education about new services was discussed as a requirement, before changes take place, so people feel confident in new systems.
- There was a suggestion that professionals could learn from those who have experienced ill health, and those who have had difficult accessing services.
- There was also concern expressed about barriers such as language, physical access and lack of support mechanisms such as interpreters for a number of minority groups and interest groups.

Dr Stewart Findlay, Clinical Lead for the NHS Better Health Programme said: “The role of VONNE is invaluable and will help inform the options on the future of acute hospital services during our formal public consultation later in 2017. The aim is to meet the care needs of the whole population, and VONNE and their voluntary sector partners, who have close connections with service users, have provided a key insight in to the opinions of groups whose views may otherwise go unheard.

“Our job is to feed these views into the programme and use this information to influence future decisions. We are grateful to all partners, groups and individuals who have been involved in the process so far. Further engagement, both with the public and partners, and with community groups, will continue in the coming months.”

The full VONNE report is 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.

ENDS

A partnership between local NHS clinical commissioning groups and foundation trusts



*The NHS in Darlington,
Durham and Tees*

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:

Communications Team

NHS Better Health Programme

Tel: 01642 745401
Email: necsu.betterhealthprogramme@nhs.net
Web: www.nhsbetterhealth.org.uk
Twitter: www.twitter.com/NHSBetterHealth
Facebook: www.facebook.com/nhsbetterhealthprogramme