

Putting patients and the public first

The White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* set out the Government's ambition to give patients more information and choice about their care – in future there will be 'no decision about me without me'. Patients will have more comprehensive information about NHS services and will share in decisions about their care. The White Paper also outlines plans to strengthen the patient's voice through the introduction of a new consumer champion, HealthWatch (see HealthWatch summary sheet on Page 3).

Key themes and proposals

Patients and carers will have far more clout and choice. The current offer of choice will be increased to include:

- A choice of any willing provider wherever relevant
- A choice of named consultant-led team for elective care will be introduced by April 2011 where clinically appropriate
- A choice of treatment and provider in some mental health services will begin to be introduced from April 2011
- Maternity Choice will be extended by developing new provider networks.
- There will be increased choice in care for long-term conditions as part of personal care planning
- We will move towards a national choice offer to support people's preferences for end of life care
- Choice of diagnostic testing and choice post diagnosis will begin to be introduced from April 2011
- People will be given more information about research studies, and scope to join in if they wish
- The right to choose to register with any GP practice they want with an open list, without being restricted by where they live
- A coherent 24/7 urgent care service in every area of the England will be developed

Patients will have access to more information about healthcare, in a range of formats

- People will have access to comprehensive, trustworthy and easy to understand information from a range of sources on conditions, treatments and lifestyle choices which will help them look after their own and their family's health
- Information will support choice and accountability. In future, there should be more, robust information, comparable between similar providers, on safety, effectiveness and patient experience.
- Patients and carers will be able to access the information they want through a range of means, to ensure that no individual or section of the community is left out.

Patients will be able to rate and record their experience of care and patient experience data will be given more prominence

- The NHS will design and deliver improved services in the areas that matter most to patients by understanding and acting upon their experiences of care through patient feedback.

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- Where appropriate, through real-time feedback systems, the NHS will collect and respond to patient experience at the point of care.
- Patients will be able to rate the quality of care they receive and see how other patients have rated their care too.
- Information will be made accessible to patients, their carers and the public to help them make informed choices.

Patients will have greater control of their records and share them with organisations such as patient support groups if they chose to

- With greater access to the information held in their records, patients will be better able to take decisions about their own health and care
- Patients will be able to check their records and ensure they are accurate which will improve safety
- Patients will be able to share their records with third parties, such as their carers or support groups for patients, who can help patients understand their records and manage their condition better
- It will be simple for a patient to download their record and pass it to any organisation of their choice

Patients will make decisions in partnership

- Patients will be fully involved in their own care, with decisions made in partnership with clinicians
- The Department will work with patients and professionals to bring forward proposals about transforming care through shared decisions-making

HealthWatch

The White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* set out that patients and communities need a strong, independent champion that can represent their views, support individuals and hold services to account.

HealthWatch England will aim to become the national champion for health and social care consumers. Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will evolve to become local HealthWatch organisations. This is part of the Government's ambition to put patients at the heart of the NHS (please also see the *Putting patients and the public first* summary sheet on Pages 1-2).

Key points and proposals

Local HealthWatch

Will be funded by and accountable to local authorities *Representing the community, holding services to account*

- They will continue to represent the views of their community in shaping the commissioning and delivery of services
- They will be able to propose poor services for investigation and a HealthWatch representative will sit on the local Health and Wellbeing Board

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Supporting individuals

- Local authorities will be able to commission HealthWatch to provide NHS complaints advocacy, as well as advice on accessing services and making choices about care.

National voice

- Local HealthWatch organisations will feed intelligence to HealthWatch England.

HealthWatch England

- Will be the independent consumer arm of the Care Quality Commission
- It will provide support for local HealthWatch organisations and leadership
- HealthWatch England will be able to recommend services for investigation by CQC
- The Secretary of State for Health, the NHS Board and the health regulators will have to listen to the views of HealthWatch England.

Relationship with local authorities and commissioners

- As well as commissioning support for and services from HealthWatch, local authorities will have to ensure their local HealthWatch is effective
- Commissioners will continue to have a duty to involve the public in decisions

Transition

- Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will evolve into local HealthWatch organisations for 2012.