



News Update  
February 09 – March 09

*'Keeping you informed on health and social care issues'*

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## Local News and Events

### Cumbria's first dedicated Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit.

Building work is underway on Cumbria's first dedicated Psychiatric Care Unit (PICU). When completed, the unit will provide short term care and treatment to the most unwell people across the county, promoting a rapid improvement in their condition.

Around £3 million is being spent by Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to extend and refurbish the existing PICU at the Carleton Clinic site in Carlisle.

The unit currently contains 6 beds and provides intensive and active treatment to

patients in North Cumbria during an acute phase of their psychiatric illness. Patients requiring this level of care in the south of the county have previously travelled out of the county. This new unit will mean that they can be treated in a modern, purpose designed, 10 bedded unit in their own county. It will provide a calm and therapeutic environment promoting safety, privacy and dignity throughout.

The plans for the new unit formed part of a public consultation during last summer and is part of a wider project to modernise mental healthcare facilities in the county.

The building work is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

### Expert help a couple of clicks away

A new online self-assessment service has been made available in Cumbria so that disabled and older people can get the right equipment and care to suit their needs.

The occupational therapy self assessment system is now available online at [www.self-assess.co.uk/cumbria](http://www.self-assess.co.uk/cumbria) and is designed to be a quick and easy alternative to waiting for an appointment to see an occupational therapist. After logging on, people can browse equipment catalogues, pursue a specific problem or complete a full assessment online.

The system, which has been developed by the county council and ADL Smartcare, has already been piloted with service users through local disability associations. A feedback button that allows users to comment on their experiences of using the system will help develop it further.

### Housing issues for older people

Cumbria County Council is interested in hearing views about housing options for older people in the county. They have asked Shaping Our Lives, an independent organisation, to speak to around 100 people to find out a range of views and opinions.

Meetings will be held in:-

Barrow – 24<sup>th</sup> February

Whitehaven – 24<sup>th</sup> February

Carlisle – 25<sup>th</sup> February

Kendal – 25<sup>th</sup> February  
Penrith – 26<sup>th</sup> February  
Workington – 26<sup>th</sup> February  
Keswick – 26<sup>th</sup> February

Each discussion group will run for up to two hours. There will be no more than ten people in each group. Travel expenses will be covered and other costs can also be met. If you are aged 50+ and would like to come along to a group discussion about this, please get in touch with Jenny or Jane at Shaping Our Lives: telephone 0845 241 0383

Email:  
[cumbriahousingconsultation@googlemail.com](mailto:cumbriahousingconsultation@googlemail.com)

## Understanding and Supporting People Who Self-Harm

These informative and participative one-day workshops will help you develop a general understanding of self-harm. They are running from 10.00am – 4.00pm and will include refreshments, lunch and a resource pack at a cost of £109.25 per person.

The dates for the workshops are as follows;

- **Friday 3 April 2009** at Morton Community Centre, Wigton Road, Carlisle
- **Wednesday 6 May 2009** at Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston
- **Thursday 14 May 2009** at Cumbria Wildlife centre, Plumgarths, Kendal
- **Tuesday 2 June 2009** at St Bees Management Centre, St Bees

To book, call Jill on 01768 870824 or 07818 864271. E-mail: [info@jilleastham.co.uk](mailto:info@jilleastham.co.uk) or visit [www.jilleastham.co.uk](http://www.jilleastham.co.uk)

## Deaf Awareness Training

Are you aware of deaf and hard of hearing people around you? Book a place on a Deaf Awareness training session, which costs £30. Sessions will be held at:

Old Customs House, Whitehaven on **Tuesday 3 March 2009** from 9.30am – 12.30pm

DeafVision, 3 Compton Street, Carlisle on **Thursday 26 February 2009** from 9.30am –

1pm **Thursday 26 March 2009** from 9.30am – 1pm

DeafVision, Castle Street, Kendal on **Monday 23 February 2009** from 9.30am – 1pm, **Monday 30 March 2009** from 9.30am – 1pm

DeafVision, Duke Street, Barrow on **Thursday 5 March 2009** from 9.30am – 1pm.

For more information or to book contact: William T. Turner on 01946 852888, or e-mail: [william@deafvision.co.uk](mailto:william@deafvision.co.uk)

## Leadership and management "roadshows" - coming to your sub-region

Skills for Care are holding "roadshows" across the North West to promote the importance of having effective leaders and managers within the sector and introducing the Skills for Care adult social care manager induction standards.

12th March 10.00am - 12.00pm Risedale Estates, Barrow

12th March 1.30pm - 3.30pm Cumbria View, Kendal

13th March 10.00am - 12.00pm Glenmore Trust, Carlisle

13th March 1.30pm - 3.30pm West House, Cockermouth

There are a number of sessions planned. To book a place on one of the sessions, please email [northwest@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:northwest@skillsforcare.org.uk) clearly stating **date**, **venue** and **time** of session. Each organisation attending the roadshows will be given a **free** pack of leadership and management worth £39!

[http://northwest.skillsforcare.org.uk/events/events\\_listing/LandM\\_Roadshow.aspx](http://northwest.skillsforcare.org.uk/events/events_listing/LandM_Roadshow.aspx)

## Self Directed Support

Skills for Care North West, Cumbria Action for Health and the Cumbria LINK join forces to host this event on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009 at Rheged, Penrith. There will be a National and local overview of this, an opportunity to hear how self directed support works in practice and the chance to explore how Third Sector organisations can embrace the

opportunities. The Cumbria LINK wants to know what your issues and concerns are around this agenda so that we can work together to resolve these. Bring your issues with you or send them to us in advance.

For more information and to book your place go to:

<http://northwest.skillsforcare.org.uk/Cumbria>

For more information on self directed support in Cumbria read on.....

## News from Adult Social Care

### Self Directed Support In Cumbria

In the last Cumbria LINK bulletin, I introduced myself and told you a little about my work for Adult Social Care in Cumbria County Council. I've been asked to contribute another article and so I thought I should tell you more about how we are implementing self directed support in Cumbria.

Self directed support aims to give people who need social care and support more choice and control over the services they receive. There are different ways of achieving this.

For many years, we have offered our service users the option of self directed support through direct payments. These are payments we make to service users instead of arranging services for them. The service user (or their representative) uses these payments to arrange their own services. They can buy these from providers or employ their own staff. The service user produces accounts to show how the money is being spent.

In 2007, Cumbria County Council joined a national project called in Control Total. A national organisation called in Control had developed a model of self directed support called in Control. In Control Total aims to implement self directed support, using the in Control model for all users of Adult Social Care Services. At the end of 2007, the Government published their 'Putting People First' document which said they expected all

councils to implement self directed support as part of the broader transformation of social care.

So how does the in Control model work?

> **Assessment of need** – Service users have an assessment of their needs. This checks they are eligible for support from the council and identifies their needs.

> **Resource Allocation** – The assessment also identifies the maximum amount of money that could be made available to pay for services to meet this level of need.

> **Support planning** – In the knowledge of what their assessed needs are, and the maximum amount of funding that could be made available to meet these needs, the service user is then encouraged to plan the support they think they need. Service users can produce their own support plans or can ask others to help them with this. Support plans must detail how much the support will cost.

> **Agreeing the support plan** – The service user's support plan is then submitted to their social worker to be agreed.

> **Managing the money** – The money required for the agreed support plan will be made available in the form of an individual budget. There are a number of ways in which the individual budget can be managed. The service user can receive the individual budget as a direct payment, an indirect payment to a trust, as a service fund paid to a provider, the service user can ask the social worker to arrange the support or a combination of these.

In Cumbria, we have just started the phased implementation of self directed support and in Control. We are using new person centred assessments and encouraging service users to get involved in support planning. We are implementing this for new service users to our older adults, physical disabilities and learning disabilities social work teams. We are monitoring progress closely and we are collecting information about costs which will enable us to develop our resource allocation system.

For more information see: Self directed support:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/adultsocialcare/ICT/>

In Control: <http://www.in-control.org.uk>

If you have any queries about this article or suggestions for future articles, please let me know.

Peter Knock – Public Information Manager.

Telephone: 01539 713379

Email: [peter.knock@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:peter.knock@cumbriacc.gov.uk)

## News from NHS Cumbria

### Green light for NHS Cumbria

Cumbria has scored high marks under a new NHS programme designed to improve the way health services are commissioned in England. As part of this process, the primary care trust's strategy, financial management and board skills were assessed by a strategic health authority lead panel using a traffic light system – with a green light indicating the highest score.

Cumbria achieved a green light in all three categories. Cumbria's report includes particular praise for our work with family doctors, who now have more responsibilities to develop new health services closer to where people live; the drive to reduce health inequalities in Cumbria and the impressive turnaround achieved in the last two years.

The full assurance report is available at [www.cumbriapct.nhs.uk/pct](http://www.cumbriapct.nhs.uk/pct).

For more information, contact our Public Engagement Unit on 01539 797878 or [publicengagement@cumbriapct.nhs.uk](mailto:publicengagement@cumbriapct.nhs.uk)

## Around the localities ...

### North and East Cumbria

#### New Services for Penrith Community

**Hospital** - At the beginning of January, new services were put in place in Penrith hospital, with a team of GPs now providing fixed hours on the wards. At the same time, the hospital started running a Primary Care Assessment Service (PCAS) to offer more local access to tests and treatment for minor injuries, minor illnesses and medical emergencies. As part of spreading the word about the new arrangements, we're

designing a leaflet for patients to tell them what to expect, and how else to get health advice out of hours, or in a hurry. We have a temporary draft available at hospital reception now, and are working on an improved, glossy version. We'll be asking patient and user groups to comment on the leaflet before it goes to print – if you're interested, please contact us.

**Carlisle Stakeholder Group Meeting** - In Carlisle, we're in the process of planning a big Stakeholder Group meeting in March/April – date to be confirmed. The Carlisle Locality Stakeholder Group will help those who plan and deliver services in the Carlisle district to respond to local needs, and will give people an opportunity to influence priorities for the area. If you have a hot topic you'd like us to discuss, or are keen to get involved, please let us know.

**Cancer Patient and Carer Groups** - In Eden, Carlisle and the West, NHS Cumbria is supporting new groups with the aim of involving patients and carers in helping to keep improving cancer services. The number of people diagnosed with cancer continues to increase as our population ages, and the consequence of successful treatment is that more people are living after cancer than ever before. If you have been affected by cancer, and would like to help improve services, please get in touch. Please note – this is **not** a support group, but we can put you in touch with one if you want us to.

Your local lead for Public Engagement in Eden and Carlisle is Anna Scamans. Anna can be reached on 0778 551 8520 or [anna.scamans@cumbriapct.nhs.uk](mailto:anna.scamans@cumbriapct.nhs.uk)

### South Cumbria

#### Your Opinion Counts: Westmorland

**General Hospital** – In August 2008, NHS Cumbria created a new "Step Up, Step Down" service run by GPs and hospital nurses called the Langdale Unit at the Kendal based hospital. As the Unit has now been running for five months we want to

hear about patients' experiences and views on the new service. A letter with an enclosed comment form will be given to people when they leave the Unit. The feedback is being managed by an organisation called Patient Opinion who will collate the data. The comments will be recorded and posted on Patient Opinion's website – [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk) – together with our reply – so people can see what others think of the same service. All comments remain anonymous. The Langdale Unit has meant a real change in the care patients receive in hospital. However we need to know from a patient's perspective what is working well and what we need to improve.

**Looking to the Future – Health Services in Barrow** - Furness Partnership hosted an event looking at the future for health services in Barrow at Forum 28 on the 6<sup>th</sup> February. Presentations covered the strategic direction, admissions to hospital, public health in Barrow, primary care developments and improving care at Furness General Hospital. The event was attended by more than 50 local stakeholders who welcomed the opportunity to interact with the presenters using “e-voting” technology. One of the questions on which people “voted” was how best to engage local people in healthcare decisions. Over 90% of the audience agreed it was important to involve people although 83% went on to say it was difficult. The two methods which the audience thought would work best in Barrow were focus groups with stakeholders and the public and talking to people “on the streets” (on the lines of the successful Street Safe campaign). NHS Cumbria, working with Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service, will be holding a series of discussions with local people and third sector organisations in Barrow over the next few weeks to help us develop a vision for the shape and structure of future primary and community care services.

**A New Health and Social Care Facility in Millom** – A workshop was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> February at which the town's Health &

Social Care Forum together with other community representatives, assisted by local clinicians and social care staff, had an opportunity to comment on the progress of the project. The Forum will meet again in the spring when it is anticipated the design of the new facility will be more advanced.

Your local lead for Public Engagement in Furness and South Lakeland is Judith Deft. Judith can be reached on 0782 686 9156 or [judith.deft@cumbriapct.nhs.uk](mailto:judith.deft@cumbriapct.nhs.uk)

## **West Cumbria**

**Primary Care Assessment Service -** Based in West Cumberland Hospital, the new Primary Care Assessment Service (PCAS) is run by GPs and Nurse Practitioners and has been introduced by NHS Cumbria as part of the Closer to Home improvement programme. The change means local family doctors can now send their patients to West Cumberland Hospital for a range of tests without having to admit them to a hospital ward unnecessarily. The aim of the service is to receive referrals, assess clinical need, organise appropriate tests, and arrange immediate treatments and any additional services that patients require.

**Living with Psoriasis** - Maryport Health Services with the support of The Psoriasis Association held an event in Maryport at The Wave, on Saturday 31st January for people affected by the skin condition. Specialists in dermatology talked about living with psoriasis on a day to day basis with an update on the latest treatments. An expert patient support worker will be working alongside the community dermatology service in Maryport to offer extra support for psoriasis sufferers from West Cumbria.

**NHS Dentistry** - NHS Cumbria has secured 30,000 additional NHS dental places for people in West Cumbria. As part of NHS Cumbria's promise to provide NHS dental care to anyone who wants it, £1.75million has been invested in 4 new dental practices. The primary care trust has awarded the

contract to dental provider Oasis Dental Care Ltd to deliver four new purpose built surgeries in Whitehaven, Workington, Maryport and Egremont. The services should be up and running in the latter half of this year. Patients living in West Cumbria who are currently on the waiting list for an NHS dentist will be informed by letter about where and when the surgery near them is due to open, in advance of the new practices being opened.

Your local lead for Public Engagement in Allerdale and Copeland in Christine Harrison. Christine can be reached on 0778 557 8574 or [christine.harrison@cumbriapct.nhs.uk](mailto:christine.harrison@cumbriapct.nhs.uk)

## **Guidance/Best Practice**

### **More help with long term conditions**

New guidance helps commissioners to put patients in the driving seat- New guidance to help NHS and local authority commissioners ensure that people with long term conditions are more involved in decisions about their illness and treatment has been issued by the Department of Health today.

The document, Supporting People with Long Term Conditions: Commissioning Personalised Care Planning, will help the Government achieve its goal that by 2010 every one of the 15 million people with a long term condition will be offered a personalised care plan.

The guidance explains how NHS and social care services can provide personalised care and services for people with long term conditions,

<https://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.asp?ReleaseID=390082&NewsAreaID=2&HUserID=878,793,891,856,778,870,868,845,786,674,677,767,684,762,718,674,708,683,706,718,674>

### **Involving people who use services in recruitment - a good practice guide**

FOCUS and Skills for Care, have produced a guide which aims to increase the quality of the recruitment and selection process of staff through the effective involvement of people who use services and carers. The guide can be viewed online at:

[http://northwest.skillsforcare.org.uk/news/news\\_archive/Involving\\_PWUS\\_in\\_recruitment\\_a\\_good\\_practice\\_guide.aspx](http://northwest.skillsforcare.org.uk/news/news_archive/Involving_PWUS_in_recruitment_a_good_practice_guide.aspx)

## **National News**

### **Reforming welfare - Transforming lives**

A major step forward in disabled people's rights is promised in the Government's new Welfare Reform Bill, introduced today. The Welfare Reform Bill, which builds on the White Paper published in December, contains a new "right to control" for disabled people, which recognises that they are the experts in their own lives. The right to control is just one of a package of measures that promises to transform people's lives contained in the new Bill, which is formally laid before Parliament today. Others include changes to provide more help for workless parents, drug users and the long term unemployed. The Government's welfare reforms are the biggest shake-up of the benefits system for 60 years. Web:

<http://xpressdigest.org.uk/?p=13061?=&xpdm ail>

### **Valuing people now**

New vision for people with learning disabilities. People with learning disabilities will be supported in every aspect of their lives, from housing and health to employment, Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson announced today.

'Valuing People Now - A Three Year Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities' presents a new vision for improving services for people with learning disabilities across health, housing, employment and community care services. It follows a comprehensive consultation involving more than 10,000 people.

Improving training, commissioning of services and strengthening local structures to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, are fundamental elements of the Strategy.

<https://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.asp?ReleaseID=390074&NewsAreaID=2&HUserID=878,793,891,856,778,870,868,845,786,674,677,767,684,762,718,674,708,683,706,718,674>

## **Services probed for older rural people**

The government is investigating ways of delivering services to older rural people. Experts from the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force and Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) are working together on the study. As part of the inquiry, they have issued a call for evidence of good practice and innovation related to Social Inclusion and participation, Improving health and well-being, supporting older people to live independently.

The provision of transport Findings will be fed into a wider strategy. A Cabinet Office spokesman said the aim was to ensure older rural people enjoyed optimal well-being. In relation to social inclusion, researchers were keen to find examples of good practice for improving participation in social and community activities for older rural people. They were also keen to identify ways of providing low-level preventative services that improved health and well-being.

When it came to health and well-being, researchers were looking for effective models of service delivery help older rural people live independently at home. And in terms of public transport, they were eager to identify methods of providing flexible and responsive public or community transport. [http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=696&Itemid=110](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=696&Itemid=110)

## **Independent Review of Older People's Engagement with Government**

On 22 May 2008 the Minister for Pensions Reform announced that John Elbourne had been asked to "examine the current arrangements for the engagement of older people and the ability of those arrangements to inform policy and actions of Government at all levels".

The Government has received and considered further comments on John Elbourne's report, and published its response on 3 February 2009. To view their report, please go to their website at: [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind\\_review\\_older\\_peoples\\_eng\\_with\\_govt.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/ind_review_older_peoples_eng_with_govt.asp)

## **Bringing pensioners in from the cold**

Age Concern Director General, Gordon Lishman, voices unease at the plight of Britain's pensioners in the cold weather. Before Christmas, Ofgem chief Alistair Buchanan was reported as saying that energy companies had improved from a B- to a B+ in their 'end of term report card'. It is unlikely that the millions of people frightened to turn up their heating during the recent arctic temperatures would agree with this complacent endorsement.

As Energy Secretary Ed Miliband admitted recently, we should feel ashamed that more than five million households live in fuel poverty in one of the richest countries in the world. Half of these households are pensioners, many of whom are extremely vulnerable to the cold weather. Yet Miliband's words are meaningless without firm action to back them up and there is clearly a huge job still to be done by the Government in order to reverse the escalating fuel poverty crisis. Meanwhile the energy companies continue to get away with dragging their feet when it comes to helping their poorest and most vulnerable customers. To read full article: <http://www.newstatesman.com/health/2009/01/pensioners-energy-cold-poorest>

## **The Health Profile of England**

Health Profile of England provides a collation of national and regional data to provide a baseline against which people can compare data from their own Local Health Profile (LHP). The 2008 report updates tables showing regional comparisons and national trends for indicators presented in Local Health Profiles, as well as a wide ranging snapshot of public health and well-being in England and a section on international comparisons.

The Health Profile of England is intended to be of use to public service professionals and officials within the local community - such as local councilors and primary care trust directors of public health - who are in a position to exert influence over the planning, commissioning, procurement and delivery of public health programmes. But the document will also be of interest to a much wider audience - anyone with an interest in the profile of health and health determinants in this country.

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH\\_093465](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_093465)

## **New deal for dementia care**

Care for people with dementia will be transformed with the appointment of dementia advisers, better training for GP's and the establishment of memory services staffed by specialists to provide early diagnosis and treatment, Health Secretary Alan Johnson announced today. The first National Dementia Strategy, backed by £150 million over the first two years, will increase awareness of dementia, ensure early diagnosis and intervention and radically improve the quality of care that people with the condition receive. The strategy calls for specialist memory services to be established throughout the country. These will allow people with dementia to have their diagnosis made accurately and early in the course of the illness as well as get access to treatment and intervention that can help them live well with the condition.

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH\\_094063](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH_094063)

## **The NHS Constitution.**

The NHS Constitution was published on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. This Constitution establishes the principles and values of the NHS in England. It sets out rights to which patients, public and staff are entitled, and pledges which the NHS is committed to achieve, together with responsibilities that the public, patients and staff owe to one another to ensure that the NHS operates fairly and effectively. All NHS bodies, private and third sector providers supplying NHS services will be required by law to take account of this Constitution in their decisions and actions. To view the constitution document please visit:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/healthcare/nhsconstitution/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/healthcare/nhsconstitution/index.htm)

## **Get Involved**

### **Customers count - home care service users asked for their opinions**

A new survey which will help shape how home care is delivered in Cumbria is being carried out from the beginning of this month.

The 2008/09 User Experience Survey is being sent to a randomly selected sample of over 65 year olds who are currently using Cumbria County Council's home care services. The survey will use postal and telephone questionnaires with the option of alternative formats such as audio or Braille to those service users that require it.

The results of the survey will be used by Cumbria County Council and the Department of Health to build a picture of the experiences of those in receipt of home care services and will also be used to see whether improvements can be made.

A summary of all responses will be published around August 2009.

Home care is provided to people in their own homes. Its purpose - as part of community care - is to help people remain living at home as an alternative to moving into some form of residential or nursing home.

It is a flexible service and can be used to provide a break to carers (this is sometimes called respite) either on a one-off or regular basis.

Home care can include Personal care (such as help with getting in and out of bed; use of the toilet; getting washed and dressed/undressed; eating meals). Support at home (providing practical help rather than personal care such as collecting pensions and shopping; preparing meals; day or night sitting in exceptional circumstances; lighting fires; and essential household hygiene).

Home care is provided by paid care staff who visit people at home. Every person receiving this service will have a Care Plan produced by a social worker. This plan will describe how often care staff will visit, what they will do and how long this is expected to take.

### **Free Prescriptions in England**

All prescriptions are free in Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland will abolish prescription charges soon. Cancer patients from April 1<sup>st</sup>, people under 19 and over 60 and those suffering from a list of illnesses which probably seemed sensible in 1968 don't have to pay. But there is plenty of evidence that many poor people do not take medication, or sometimes take medical advice because of the cost. The system we are left with in England is a dog's dinner. Gordon Brown is the first politician to make improvements to it for the last 40 years. Professor Ian Gilmore is leading a review of Prescription Charges with a view to extending free prescriptions to more people with long term conditions.

[www.dh.gov.uk/prescriptionchargesreview](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prescriptionchargesreview).

The closing date for the web survey and for written submission is 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009. Please respond. But we do not think the way forward is for a list of deserving and undeserving illnesses. We think the time has

come to abolish prescription charges in England. The principle that healthcare should be free at the point of delivery is a very sound one and governments repeatedly pledge their support to it. But for many poor people these pledges are not reflected in their experience.

### **Patient Opinion**

Patient Opinion was founded by a GP who wanted to find a way to make the wisdom of patients available to the NHS.

If you've experienced health care recently, either as a patient yourself or as a carer or friend of someone else you can share your story on [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk). All opinions are sent to the Healthcare Commission which is the national regulator for the NHS in England.

Patient opinion are convinced that patient's experiences – good or bad – are essential to improving the NHS and the NHS does listen to what people say on patient opinion. This has been proven as hospitals have posted replies telling them of how they have improved services as a direct result of feedback on the site.

Patients and carers can also find out what other people think of local hospitals, hospices and mental health services. People can also tell it like it is – patients and carers know what the service was like and come up with lots of great ideas about how it could be better.

### **North West Carers Consultancy.**

The North West Carers Consultancy is a network which aims to enable carers to influence change through a local, regional and national consultation network.

In order to achieve this aim the consultancy has moved to becoming a social enterprise. The enterprise will be a forum for all carers and carer organisations to feed into and help develop and expand its range of services. Each area will supply an average of 5 representatives either individuals or representing groups who will link together by phone or electronically by e-mail or internet.

If you or your group are interested in finding out more about the North West Carers Panel then please contact Michelle Roberts on 07920 589704 or e-mail: [Michelle@crossroadscaring.com](mailto:Michelle@crossroadscaring.com).

## Cumbria LINK Work Items

### NHS Dentists

We know that many people in Cumbria are still without an NHS Dentist, the situation seems worse in West Cumbria. We are meeting with the people who commission dental services to find out what they are doing to improve the situation.

We are also interested to know about your experiences. Do you know what to do if you have no dentist but need emergency treatment, have you used the emergency dental centres, are you on the waiting list for an NHS dentist, if you have an NHS dentist are you happy with the service they provide.

### Disposable Incontinence Pads

Incontinence is a condition that affects a number of people and in Cumbria our health services provide a continence service to help people manage the condition and make sure that they get the right treatment and support. We have been told that some people are finding it difficult to manage with the allocation of free disposable pads. We are contacting service users and carers to find their views. If you would like to contribute there is a survey you can take part in. The questionnaire can be downloaded here or you can contact the LINK support team to request a copy of the survey to be posted to you.

If you would like more information about incontinence the continence foundation web site contains a wealth of information on the subject. <http://www.continence-foundation.org.uk/>

### West Cumberland Hospital

There are plans to build a new hospital in West Cumbria, we would like to hear from

you if you have something to say about this. We will be setting up a task and complete group to listen to peoples' views and make sure that those responsible for the new hospital take into consideration those views during the planning, design, location and build of the new hospital.

### Closer to Home Consultation

In early summer this year there will be a consultation in the south of Cumbria. The vision of the NHS in Cumbria is for people who need health care to get the best possible treatment and support as close as possible to their own homes. When people do need specialist care, hospitals would offer faster access to first-class services.

They say they can only do this by making changes to the way care is delivered both in hospital and in the community and by making sure that these improvements make the best of our staff, equipment and money

There will be opportunities for people to get involved in early discussion about the consultation in South Cumbria. If you are interested in getting involved please let us know.

Please contact the Communication team at Cumbria CVS if you require alternative formats of this material. 01768 800350.

Action for Health Contact details:  
Jozi Brown – telephone: 01228 512513  
Email: [jozib@cumbriacvs.org.uk](mailto:jozib@cumbriacvs.org.uk)

Cumbria LINK Contact details:  
Jane Mcfarlane – telephone: 01228 512513  
Email: [janem@cumbriacvs.org.uk](mailto:janem@cumbriacvs.org.uk)

Postal Address:  
27 Spencer Street  
Carlisle  
Cumbria  
CA1 1BE