



Equity and excellence: liberating the NHS Summary

On Monday 12th July, the new coalition government published a **White Paper** called *Equity and excellence: liberating the NHS*, saying how they will change to NHS to try to make it better.

A "White Paper" is something a Government writes letting people know what it's going to do before it takes those things to the Houses of Parliament and MPs vote them into law.

The **White Paper** talks about all of the plans that the new government has. It isn't possible to write a summary of everything that has been said in just a few days so in this edition we're going to tell you about two of the most important issues in the paper. These are

- the new **powers that GPs** (local doctors) will have
- the start-up of a new organisation called **HealthWatch**, which will replace Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)

New powers for GPs

The government thinks that health care in the past has been run by managers who have been trying to get doctors and nurses to meet targets. Instead of doing that, they want to make sure that your GP (local doctor), is able to talk to you and decide what kind of help you need.

The really important difference between this and what has happened before, is that **GPs will choose what help people need themselves instead of going to managers**. They will choose this help on what makes people better in their local area.

GPs will form into groups. These will be called GP commissioning consortia. Every GP will join one of these consortia. These groups will work with local people and local councils to choose what kind of help they want to buy in (this is called commissioning) to give the best health care for people in their area. This help will not include help from opticians, dentists or chemists. These groups will be big enough to manage money properly but small enough to make an important difference to the way local people are looked after. They



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will be able to check things are working for themselves or they can buy some help in. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), who make these decisions right now, will make sure that the new groups know how to get the right kind of help to work properly.

The GP consortia will be in place, helped by the PCTs during 2011-2012 and start buying in help for local people from 2012-2013. They will be completely in charge of this by **April 2013**. That's when PCTs will be abolished.

Most importantly of all, these groups of GPs will have to make sure the people who use them are given a say in what kind of local help they get. One of the ways they will do this is through their local Healthwatch.

HealthWatch

A new independent organisation will be set up called HealthWatch England. Its job will be to listen to people and make sure that they are getting a good deal out of their health care. HealthWatch England will work with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC checks that hospitals and care centres are doing their jobs properly and looks at where things are going wrong.

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) like Bradford LINK will change to become local HealthWatch groups in April 2012. These groups will listen to what people need and want out of their health care and check that things are working well in their local area. This is what LINKs do at the moment.

HealthWatch England will give help, advice and direction to local HealthWatch groups. They will also ask these groups to give them information about what is happening to health care in the local area and if local people are happy and getting a good deal on their health care services. If there is something wrong with local health care, then local HealthWatch groups will be able to tell HealthWatch England to check up on these services without having to go to the local council first.

Local councils will give money to fund local HealthWatch groups, and check that these groups are working properly. They fund and check on local LINKs like this right now so this is not changing. But local councils will also be able to ask their local HealthWatch or HealthWatch England to do extra things like giving help to local people who have complaints about their health care and giving people more choice about what kinds of health care services they use.



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What happens next?

This White Paper is the first of a number of papers that the new government is writing about how health care is going to change and get better. The papers will be about:

- Making sure health care information works properly
- Checking that staff are doing the right jobs
- Training people to make them better at helping others
- Looking at how a new fund for helping people get expensive cancer drugs will work
- Making sure people will be able to choose what different kinds of health services they want

What are we going to do?

This White Paper is very large and complicated. We will write summaries about other important parts in the future.

Bradford LINK wants to hear what you think about the White Paper. The government wants to know what everyone thinks of the White Paper by 5th October.

Also our Health Care Quality Working Group (which used to be called the Foundation Trust Work Group) will meet on the 27th July to talk about what the White Paper will mean for people in Bradford and Airedale.

If you would like to read the whole of the White Paper for yourself, it is available by clicking on the following link:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_117353

If you want to let the new Government know what they think about the White Paper right now, then you can do this by emailing to:

nhswhitepaper@dh.gsi.gov.uk or writing to:

NHS White Paper Team
Room 601, 6th Floor
Richmond House, 79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS

You need to tell them what you think by **5th October 2010**