

# Listening, learning and working together



A report by the **Healthcare Commission** about how people are taking part in planning and improving health services across England

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## Who is this report by?



We are called the **Healthcare Commission**.

## We check health services

### Here are some examples of health services



- hospitals
- doctors
- ambulances
- health services for people with learning difficulties
- health services for people with mental health needs.

## What is this report about?

This report tells you about the main things we found out in our national study about how trusts are involving people in



- planning health services
- making health services better.

Trusts are the groups of people who have the job of managing health services in an area.

## How we found out about what trusts are doing



We wanted to find out about how different trusts are getting people involved in helping to make health services better.

To do this we

- talked to trusts in the NHS
- talked to other groups that give health care (like private hospitals)
- asked groups who speak up for people who use health care to fill in surveys
- had meetings across the country with people who work in health care and people who use health care
- talked to some members of the public.



## The main things that we found out

These are the main things that people told us that are difficult about having a say about health care.



Not enough say in the kinds of health care services that you can use.

Not enough say about how they are run.



Some people found it much harder than others to have their say about what health services should be like. For example, people who were very ill or who did not know how health services work.



Many community and user groups did not think that trusts really wanted to know what they think.



Trusts do not always give people enough time to have their say.

## More about what we found out



Trusts do not always give out information about their services or tell community and user groups how well they are working.



Not enough support to take part.  
For example

- buildings being hard to use
- not enough support for people with things like communication.



Trusts not telling people what they have done about the things people told them about health services.

Some of the ideas people have told trusts have made a difference.

Some trusts have made their services better because of what people told them.

For example, opening services for longer, making it easier to make an appointment or making hospitals nicer place to stay.

## How trusts are trying to involve people



Trusts know that it can be hard to involve lots of people and find out what they think.

Some trusts are involving people a lot. Some need to get better.

Most trusts want to get better at finding out what people think about health services.

Trusts said they are trying to



- Get to know groups in their area and learn about how to work with them.
- Work with groups to get information about what matters to people.



- Make sure they work with different groups in the way that is right for them.



- Make more use of stories about real people's experiences.



- Make patient surveys better.

**Community and patient groups** told us that these things are important to make sure lots of different people have their say.



- Find out which groups and communities live in an area.



- Have people working in the trust whose job it is to talk to groups in the community.

- Work together with the community and other groups to improve services.



- Give communities information and other things to help them say what health services they need.



- Work with local councillors, community leaders and elders in a community.



- Work with communities to make information about health services in the right way for them to use and understand.

## What people wanted to have a say about

People told us that they most wanted a say about



- GP (doctor) services
- the care of people with particular health conditions
- how people from different communities are treated.

Some people also wanted a say about



- health service staff
- how money is spent
- what hospitals are like
- making health care safer

## How people want to have their say



People told us that the main way they wanted to have their say was through talking about their experiences of health care.

They wanted more information about their local health services and how they could have their say.

People wanted to know how their experiences and stories were being used to make health services better.

## What needs to be done?

Here are the main things that we think trusts could do that will help people to have a real say about health care.



Managers of trusts and doctors and nurses should all make sure they listen to people's views and experience to make services better. This will encourage people to say what they think.



Groups that often get missed out should be supported to have a say about health care.



It should be clear how people's views are being used to decide on new health services and to make services better.



Find out if the trust and local groups have the skills, money and knowledge they need to work together.

## More about what needs to be done?

Trusts should use a checklist to make sure that they are really involving people.

They should check that they are



- supporting people's right to speak up
- keeping people involved
- using people's views to plan and make services better
- involving people in ways that work best for them
- learning how to get better at involving people

Trusts need to work with the local authority and other local services to find out what people think.

## The Department of Health



We also think the Department of Health (government) should help to make sure people have a say about health services.

These are the main things they should do

- Use people's stories and experiences to check how good health services are.
- Make sure there are ways of finding out how well trusts are involving local people.
- Help local user groups and community groups to feed in their views to health services
- Make the NHS more open to local people about what it does and why

## **The Care Quality Commission**

The Care Quality Commission will take over from the Healthcare Commission.

The Care Quality Commission is the group that will be checking up on health and social services in England.

The Care Quality Commission should have ways to check that trusts are involving people.

They should help trusts to understand how important it is to find out and use what local people think.

Thanks to all the 139 trusts and 170 user and community groups and everyone else who helped in the study.

You can find out more from our website  
<http://www.healthcarecomission.org.uk>

**Thanks to Photosymbols for the pictures**