

Some tips to help parent carer forums improve health services

1. **Understand what commissioners do** and how you can influence their work (see briefing paper *Working with commissioners and providers to influence health services*).
2. **Find out about your local Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England.** They are responsible for commissioning all health services and have to demonstrate public and patient involvement in their work (see briefing paper *Clinical commissioning groups and the NHS England*).
3. **Make use of your local Healthwatch.** Ask your local Healthwatch to help you in your work (see briefing paper *Healthwatch and how parent carer forums might find them useful*).

Use our case studies to show your local Healthwatch, commissioners and managers how patient groups working direct with commissioners and managers can be a simple but effective way to improve services. See www.cafamily.org.uk/parentcarerparticipation

4. **Find out about any clinical guidance that supports your case.** The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) provide clinical guidelines and service standards on a range of topics. NHS England will be developing quality standards, commissioning guidance and standard contracts (see briefing paper *Making use of clinical guidance and standards*).
5. **If you want to improve the way health work with education and social care,** try to influence your Health and wellbeing board (see briefing paper *Health and wellbeing boards' role in promoting integrated services and making the case to target disabled children services*).
6. **Make use of research that supports your case.** Contact a Family publish research on disabled children. Some of their reports might assist you in making a case. See www.cafamily.org.uk/professionals/research

To improve GP services

GP services will be commissioned by NHS England. Clinical commissioning groups and GPs have a responsibility to involve patients in improving the services they provide. Each GP practice has a patient participation group, made up of patient representatives who meet regularly with GP practice staff to discuss ways of improving patient experience within the GP practice.

To discuss ways of improving GP services parent carer forums can approach:

1. **GP patient participation group** – to discuss improving an individual GP practice
2. **clinical commissioning group** – to improve how services are provided by GP practices in the area covered by the clinical commissioning group. CCG Contact details can be found at www.cafamily.org.uk/parentcarerparticipation see NHS pages
3. **NHS England area team** if they are finding it difficult to engage with the clinical commissioning group. <http://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/AreaTeam-Listing.aspx>

To improve local hospital/community services

These will be commissioned by clinical commissioning groups. Providers of these services also have a responsibility to involve patients in improving services. Parent carer forums might find it advantageous to team up with neighbouring parent carer forums whose members also access these services.

To discuss ways of improving a local hospital/community service: parent carer forums can approach:

1. **the service manager or clinical lead for that service** – hospitals will continue to have patient and liaison services (PALS) who might be help forums find who to talk to. From April 2013, local Healthwatch might also be able to assist with this
2. **clinical commissioning group** – if you are finding it difficult to engage with the service manager or clinical lead for that service
3. **NHS England area team** – if you are finding it difficult to engage with the clinical commissioning group.

To improve a specialised service

These are commissioned by NHS England for patients across a larger regional area. It can be advantageous for parent carer forums to team up with other parent carer forums in their region, or across England through the National Network of Parent Carer Forums see www.nnpcof.org.uk

Providers of these services also have a responsibility to involve patients in improving services. NHS England is expected to make sure patients receive a consistent standard of service across England.

To discuss ways of improving a specialised service parent carer forums can approach:

1. **the service manager** for the service (hospitals will continue to have PALS – who might help you find who to contact)
2. **the NHS England area team** responsible for commissioning this service – if you are finding it difficult to engage with the service provider
3. **NHS England at a national level** – if they are finding it difficult to engage with the service provider and the issue affects families across England.

Clinical Reference Groups

Clinical reference groups have been formed for the different specialised services commissioned by NHS England. Each clinical reference group is made up of clinicians, commissioners, public health experts and patients and carers. They are responsible for the delivery of key 'products' such as service specifications and commissioning policies, to enable NHS England to commission services from specialist providers .

Organisations will also be able to register as stakeholders to these and take part in consultations about these services.

For more information visit <http://www.england.nhs.uk/npc-crg/>

This is one of a series of briefing papers to help parent forums work with health commissioners and providers to improve local health services for disabled children. You can browse all of these in our NHS Changes section at www.cafamily.org.uk/parentcarerparticipation

If you would like to discuss this briefing paper in more detail, please contact Sheila Davies at Contact a Family on 020 7608 8773 or email Sheila.Davies@cafamily.org.uk