

# Patient champions receive funding boost

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**The future local champions for patients and the public have been given a £3.5m funding boost, Secretary of State for Health Andrew Lansley announced today.**

From next year, **an additional £3.2m** will be made available to local authorities to establish Local HealthWatch, the new local health bodies set to replace Local Involvement Networks.

**In addition, funding of over £370,000 will also be made available** until the end of the 2011/12 financial year for 75 HealthWatch Pathfinders – a partnership between Local Involvement Networks and local authorities to test out the role of Local HealthWatch – and can be used in any part of their development. This could include spreading best practice, engaging more in the community, and financially supporting volunteers.

**Andrew Lansley said:**

“Local HealthWatch is a vital part of our plans to give people a stronger voice and drive improvements in health and social care services across the NHS.”

“Today’s announcement is a further sign of our commitment to support the dedicated staff and volunteers who are driving this forward. It gives them the support necessary to carry out their important work in shaping the future of local healthcare.”

**Becky Shaw, Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council and a member of the HealthWatch Programme Board, said:**

“Ensuring the voices of patients and the public are heard in the health and social system is a vital ingredient for future success. It is a complex task and extra resources to support councils in this task at a local level are very welcome.”

Local HealthWatch will give patients, members of the public, and carers a real say over how their local health service is run. They will drive up local involvement in the community and ensure patients understand the choices available to them in a modern NHS.

Following feedback from local authorities and local involvement networks, they now have until April 2013 to work with local health experts and volunteers to establish the new Local HealthWatch.

HealthWatch *England* will be established in October 2012, ensuring that the learning and experience taken from each of the 75 HealthWatch pathfinders will support and create consistency amongst Local HealthWatch ahead of the **new April 2013 deadline**.

**Notes to Editors**

1. The additional £3.2m funding will be made available on top of the £27m that Local Authorities already received for Local Involvement Networks in 2011/12.
2. For further information please contact the Department of Health newsdesk on 0207 210 5221.