

From the Minister of State  
Rosie Winterton MP



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Dear Forum Member,

I am writing to let you know the outcome of the review of patient and public involvement (PPI). This fundamental review of PPI formed part of the consultation leading up to *Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services* White Paper, which was published in January this year. I attach a copy of *A stronger local voice* which sets out Government policy on the future development of the patient and public involvement system.

Following the publication of the White Paper we established an Expert Panel, co-chaired by Harry Cayton, National Director for Patients and the Public at the Department of Health and Ed Mayo, Chief Executive of the National Consumer Council. The panel considered all the evidence collected over the past 18 months and made recommendations to Ministers on the future for PPI. The Expert Panel's report can be found on the Department of Health website at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

This evidence included the messages we heard from all those involved in the review activities and regional workshops as well as directly from individuals and organisations via online questionnaires and correspondence.

As you will be aware, the nature of health and social care delivery is changing radically. Strengthening the capacity of PCTs to commission services to meet the needs and support the choices of their local populations is a central element of our reform programme, and will need to be accompanied by strengthened arrangements for patient and public involvement to ensure key decisions about local health and social care are shaped by the local community.

We are committed as a Government to empowering citizens to give them more confidence and more opportunities to influence public services in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them, and in ways that will make a real difference to services. If we are to create a truly patient-led service, centred around the needs of both individuals and communities, it is essential that we create a stronger voice for patients, service users and citizens at all levels of the health and social care system.

The new PPI arrangements we are announcing today set out our plans to achieve a stronger voice. These arrangements build on your work as PPI Forum members and provide further opportunities for you to be involved in the new system.

These arrangements will address the needs expressed by many throughout the consultation and review process:

- to strengthen the accountability of the health service to patients and the public especially in the commissioning of services;
- to build more effective links with existing community networks; and
- to enable an independent voice for more effective involvement, with more people

The key elements of the new arrangements are as follows:

- The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) will be abolished
- Patient forums will be replaced by Local Involvement Networks
- Local involvement networks (LINKs) will be established for every local authority area with social services responsibilities.
- LINKs will provide flexible ways for individuals, organisations and communities to engage with health and social care organisations in ways that best suit the communities and the people in them. They will build on the best work of patient forums creating a strengthened system of user involvement and will promote public accountability in health and social care through open and transparent communication with commissioners and providers.
- LINKs should operate in an inclusive way with a membership that includes user groups, local voluntary and community sector organisations and interested individuals.
- LINKs will establish a specific relationship with overview and scrutiny committees (OSC) and have the power to refer matters to the OSC.
- OSCs will be well placed to focus their attention on the work of commissioners of health and social care services and will be able to question commissioners about the decisions they have made.
- The duties on health care organisations to involve and consult will be simplified and strengthened. There will be a new duty placed on health care commissioners to respond to what patients and the public have said.
- Work is being undertaken to explore ways of creating a stronger voice for patients, service users and members of the public at a national level.
- We want to see stronger user involvement in the regulation of health and social care providers.



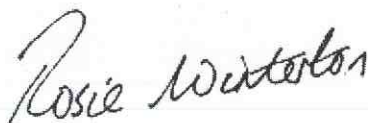
I recognise the huge amount of time, skill and energy that you as members of patients' forums have put into influencing and improving your local health services. The new arrangements are intended to build on this work allowing genuine involvement in a much wider range of ways, and real accountability at the local level so that a broad spectrum of patients, users of social care services, and the public can influence how their local services are commissioned, designed and delivered.

I hope existing patient forum members will take the opportunities to get involved in the new arrangements and to work alongside a diverse range of people and organisations. Because we want the transition to the new arrangements to be as smooth as possible, we are seeking your views on some points relating to how the new systems should be developed – these points are highlighted in the document for your comments.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for all the hard work you have already contributed towards achieving long-term improvements in our health and social care system. Your enthusiasm, effort and expertise are very much appreciated. I am certain that there is much more that you will achieve through your current PPI Forums until these new arrangements are put into place.

Indeed, I hope you will also work with us and the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health to develop these new systems in order to ensure there is a smooth transition to the new arrangements, strengthening the voice of the public and helping us create a truly patient-led NHS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosie Winterton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**ROSIE WINTERTON**

