

NHS CONSTITUTION LAUNCH

The NHS Constitution, the first of its kind in the world, was signed at the official launch at 10 Downing Street on 21st January, by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Health Secretary Alan Johnson and NHS Chief Executive David Nicholson.

The launch was attended by an invited audience of NHS staff and patient representatives who had been involved in the consultation on the draft Constitution. The West Midlands had been commended for the effort put into the consultation programme and BEN was highlighted for its contribution by the Strategic Health Authority. (A report on the BEN consultation process and outcome was presented to the PCT Board in December 2008). Consequently, Annette Hearnden, one of our PPI Managers and Tom McLoughlin, one of our patient and LINK representatives, attended the launch and signed the commemorative Constitution on behalf of BEN.

The key message:

The NHS Constitution brings together, for the first time in 61 years, the principles and values for the NHS in England. It is the first of its kind in the world.

The success of the Constitution, however, depends on the patients who use the NHS, the public who fund it and the staff who provide it, knowing what they can expect from the NHS, and the contribution they can make to developing a first class responsive health service that operates fairly and effectively.

The PCT is now required by law to take account of the Constitution in its decisions and actions.

Action required:

The PCT has a responsibility to:

- **raise awareness** of the Constitution with our staff and our local population through a focused and effective communication programme
- **engage effectively** with our staff and local population to ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities and able to exercise them
- **work in partnership** with staff and independent contactors to identify how they will use the constitution to underpin their service improvement
- **develop a relationship** based on partnership, respect and shared commitment between staff and patients where everyone knows what they can expect from the NHS and what is expected from them
- **embed** the constitution in the day to day activity of the PCT and our providers and partners
- **develop the mechanisms to take action** if patients or staff feel their rights have not been respected
- **measure** how the Constitution is used by staff and patients to drive improvements in services at an individual and community level
- **provide evidence** of how the PCT has used the Constitution to drive improvements in health services.

Some potential ways the PCT could achieve these actions:

- Make better use of electronic communication methods and other innovative ways of communicating with our staff and our local community. Target key groups with specific approaches, such as texting for young people
- Include the key principles of the constitution in job descriptions, staff induction programmes, training and professional development, KSFs.
- Take the constitution out to our community and discuss how they can exercise their rights and what to do if they feel they have not received what is rightfully theirs. Work with third sector partners to reach those already experiencing barriers in accessing health services.
- Work with GPs through the Locality teams to disseminate the constitution, raise awareness of patients and link into patient participation groups to get feedback on service improvement
- Link the Constitution into the Provider Arm SUEPA (Service User Engagement Provider Arm) project
- Work with the Local Authority and other partners to agree the principles of the Constitution so that they are embedded in joint commissioning and patient pathways.
- Identify a Constitution lead in the PCT, so that there is a single point of contact if patients or the public have concerns or feedback. Identify where these will be addressed and who has responsibility to take action and feedback to the patient or member of the public. This could be PALS.
- Identify a single point of contact in the PCT for staff who have concerns or feedback. Identify where these will be addressed and who has responsibility to take action and feedback to the member of staff. This could be within Human Resources
- Work with the Birmingham LINK to find out what is working well, what their concerns are and provide independent monitoring of our implementation of the Constitution.

This is not an exhaustive list and comments from the Board are welcome.