



## LEARNING TO LISTEN

In August, the Department of Health published Don Berwick's report into patient safety in the NHS, officially titled "A promise to learn – a commitment to act: improving the safety of patients in England."

As you might guess from the title, Berwick's emphasis throughout the report is on the NHS becoming "a learning organisation" if it is to achieve the key goals of patient safety, effectiveness, and better patient experience. "Its leaders should create and support the capability for learning, and therefore change, at scale, within the NHS" says Berwick.

The report argues strongly that harm to patients will be reduced by a constant emphasis on learning and improvement, rather than on regulation and blame. And much can be learnt from listening closely to the experiences of patients and carers.

But our experience of delivering patient feedback to NHS staff right across the UK is that sometimes, the feedback doesn't get right to the staff who need to hear it. Even when it does, the opportunity to listen and learn is not always taken. Using patient stories to improve care is not straightforward. It takes skill and determination.

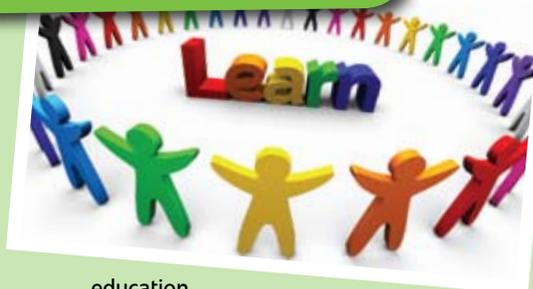
So our response to the Berwick report has been to add something quite new to Patient Opinion: online learning. We've created an online module, available to all our subscribers, which aims to help staff learn how hearing patient stories might help them deliver better care. This is new for us, so we're keen to hear your feedback and learn how we, in turn, might do this better.

If you'd like to know more about our online learning, please contact Tim Hunt, our

education

lead: [tim.hunt@patientopinion.org.uk](mailto:tim.hunt@patientopinion.org.uk)

And the last word can go to Don Berwick: "Foster wholeheartedly the growth and development of all staff, including their ability and support to improve the processes in which they work."



### Quote of the month

*"I really feel like a different person now. If my life was a film, these guys would win an Oscar"*

Praise for RDASH cardiac rehab team  
[www.patientopinion.org.uk/opinions/109189](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk/opinions/109189)

## CARE OPINION IS LIVE

Care Opinion, the new feedback service for everyone involved in adult social care, is now up and running.

We're delivering live feedback from patients, service users and stakeholders, addressing 'stay awake' issues for everyone in health and social care today.

No wonder we've seen a surge of interest in patient and user engagement, given the Keogh review, the new inspection regime and the national debate on the quality of care.

The recent inquiry into Mid Staffordshire, and the subsequent Francis Report, is focusing everyone's attention. Care

Opinion's whole approach is closely aligned with the Francis recommendations: user engagement, compassion and transparency.

Our launch means service users, relatives, carers and social care service providers will now start publishing their stories. Real experiences of care across CQC-registered providers in England are now being sent to appropriate staff members, who are now responding and using feedback to improve services.

We're already working closely with early adopter local authorities to make sure our service is as good as we can possibly get it before we roll out. If your local authority, local HealthWatch or adult social care

services want to work with us offer a simple yet powerful feedback service to your social care users, talk to us:

contact: [jasmine.ali@careopinion.org.uk](mailto:jasmine.ali@careopinion.org.uk) or [andrew.crooks@careopinion.org.uk](mailto:andrew.crooks@careopinion.org.uk)

Sharing your story is easy – just visit: [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk)



# A word from the Doc...



Paul Hodgkin

So you wait for years and then three come along a once: Francis, Keogh and now Berwick. Three reports into the state of the NHS and all saying some pretty similar things: listen to patients. Replace blame with learning. High quality services are most likely to be given by happy, well supported staff. Or as Homer Simpson might have said: 'Doh!'

And not before time the system is adjusting. Engaging patients is the new mantra. Friends and Family is really change front line service. Every self-respecting Board now kicks off with a patient story.

**"Generating change on the front line is about much, much more than data. It's about relationships."**

At Patient Opinion we have long been passionate about just how effective free text and published stories are in generating better services. And the world suddenly seems to be singing our tune: Yes, listening to patients is really important says Keogh. Yes, Berwick is right to stress learning not blame. Yes, Francis was absolutely right to recommend routine use of web-based, public platforms like PO.

All this emphasis on the patient voice and the large volume of free text comments beginning to flow through F&F have lifted the burden of generating stories from us all and created a great opportunity – how do you really change all these comments into better services that delight patients and staff?

One of the key lessons of all three reports is that generating change on the front line is about much, much more than data. It's about relationships. To change relationships with patients on the scale needed when money is short is where Patient Opinion

comes in. We've got lots of improvements in the pipeline.

However, if we're not getting it right, if the platform is not doing what you want, then tell us. We're just a phone call away on 0114 281 6256 or if you are a subscriber then have a chat with Sarah who leads our subscriber support on: [sarah.ashurst@patientopinion.org.uk](mailto:sarah.ashurst@patientopinion.org.uk)

## Meet



Andrew

### Andrew Crooks

Support Officer for Care Opinion

#### What do you do at Care Opinion?

As a Support Officer for Care Opinion I work with local authorities, CCGs, trusts and Healthwatches; and with individuals and communities that are sometimes under-represented in decision making to promote greater service user participation.

#### How would you improve social care?

Like most people who need social care services to break down the barriers to independence, I need my carers to be responsive and personable and skilled. My big idea is to do away with zero hours contracts, increase training opportunities and award carers a basic salary that includes paying those carers in 'homecare' positions between calls.

#### What could you not live without?

I couldn't live without my wife Helen and my little daughter Lottie, and that's because the three of us are kind a' like, in rock'n'roll parlance, a family equivalent of the 'crucial three' (I'll leave you guessing). But of course music is something else I can't live without, thanks to the influence of Joe Strummer.

## WHY WE ARE KEEN ON ONLINE FEEDBACK

Peter Denton,  
Tameside Healthwatch

GUEST  
PIECE

When we were setting up Healthwatch we knew we needed to collect data about more services than the LINK had done. We needed a way to do this within our limited resources. The three core elements of our work are gathering insight into how services are running; influencing change and improvement in services (based on people's feedback); and providing information to help people to make a choice about what services they access. We think that Patient Opinion and Care Opinion do this well – and our local CCG and hospital already use the system.

We have plugged Patient Opinion/Care Opinion into our website ([www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk)) and offer access via paper forms and

# healthwatch

telephone too. Paper forms are used by our local Healthwatch Champions – trained, community based volunteers who gather experiences which we put onto Patient Opinion at the office.

Using our Healthwatch Champions network, we aim to get 1,000 stories each year. That might seem a lot, but it's only 4 stories per month each for 20 volunteers.

The result? All our partners can quickly

access and use the experiences that Healthwatch collects. We do some monthly trend analysis on stories, as part of an 'early warning system', to help to identify any emerging patterns and concerns. We think Patient Opinion/Care Opinion offers an excellent way to gather and analyse patient and service user experiences across a broad range of services.

For more information, contact Peter Denton, Healthwatch Manager on 0161 339 4985.

## Contact us...

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