



Get involved – make a difference

People in the Highlands can become involved in their own health care – and make a difference. You can help NHS Highland to improve how it cares for you and how it plans your health services by letting them know what you think.

There are many ways for you to do this, but Highland HealthVOICES Network is one of the ways NHS Highland keeps in touch with people who have an interest in health and social care services.

The Highland HealthVOICES Network is currently looking for volunteers living in Ross and Cromarty, Skye and Lochalsh and Lochaber to join the Mid Highland Community Health Partnership Committee, which oversees local health services.

This opportunity would suit people who want to get plugged into taking part in important local health care decisions and feel they can make a useful contribution to improving services for patients.

No matter what experiences and background you have, your enquiry would be welcomed as long as you have the time and interest to contribute positively. It is a voluntary role, but NHS Highland can provide practical and financial support.

This is a large area but Gill McVicar, General Manager of the Mid Highland Community Health Partnership, would like to encourage someone from each different geographical area to come forward – one each from Ross and Cromarty, Skye and Lochalsh and Lochaber. This would mean that each person would only have to attend the meeting that was local to them.

She said “As a Community Health Partnership, we are committed to working with our local communities and responding to their needs. The contribution that patients or people interested in health services can make to this committee will be invaluable to us.”

What skills do you need?

- Good communication skills, including being able to communicate on behalf of other people, even if you do not share their views. It is also important to share information from the meetings with others.

- A willingness to work in a positive way alongside a wide range of people, to help all patients and communities.
- An interest in learning about the NHS. You will be supported by NHS Highland staff.

Hamish Wood, who is member who sits on the South East Community Health Partnership Committee, said: *“I would encourage people to participate. I strongly feel that we, as members of the public, and the users of the service have an important role with the NHS to improve and enhance services.”*

If a committee role is not your cup of tea you may still be interested in joining the wider Network. It's a Highland-wide network, which is open to anyone who receives a health service; cares for someone who receives a health service; or lives in, works in or uses the services in the NHS Highland area.

You would be welcome, either as an individual, or as a member of a community or voluntary group to which you belong or have links.

You can choose how much or how little you want to do. For example, you may only want to be sent a copy of the monthly newsletter, Network News, or you may want to reply to questionnaires, surveys or take part in workshops.

Some members choose to be actively involved as full members of committees working in partnership with NHS Highland staff. You won't be out-of-pocket as NHS Highland has a Public Involvement Expenses Policy that covers travel, carer and other support expenses.

Examples of the projects or pieces of work that members of the Highland HealthVOICES Network have taken part in recently are: designing the questionnaire around changing the visiting times for patients at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness; a workshop about the use of medicines in Highland; taking part in a series of visits to GP Practices as part of the review of their services; and helping develop patient friendly information leaflets.

Do you want to find out more?

Get in touch with Karen Burnett, Highland HealthVOICES Network Coordinator for an informal chat about the Network or the Mid Highland Community Health Partnership role - NHS Highland, Assynt House, Beechwood Park, Inverness IV2 3BW, tel: 01463 704702 or email karen.burnett1@nhs.net or go to <http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/GetInvolved/> for information on the Highland HealthVOICES Network and other ways to get involved locally.