

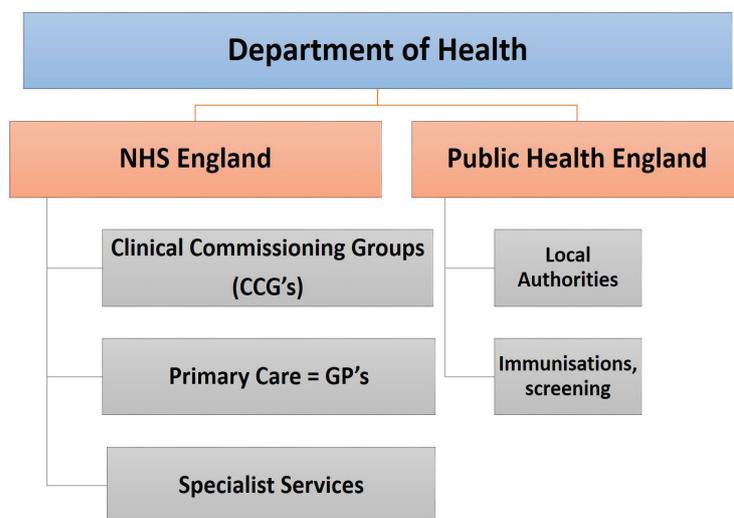
Introduction to the NHS

The NHS is very complex and navigating the different organisations and people can be overwhelming for parent carers new to this system. This factsheet highlights the main organisations in England, what they do, and their responsibilities.

Key organisations and agencies

Department of Health

The Department of Health (DH) has overall responsibility for the NHS, including policy and legislation, improvements and funding. There are many agencies that are involved in the NHS, but for the purpose of receiving NHS care there are two main ones – NHS England and Public Health England.



NHS England

NHS England directly commissions (orders and pays for) some areas of NHS care such as GPs, dentists and pharmacies. They are also responsible for all Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in England.

NHS England are also responsible for directly commissioning specialist services that are deemed 'low incidence' – either because they are very specialist, or people do not require them very frequently.

NHS England is also responsible for quality assurance, improvement and support of Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Public Health England

Public Health England is responsible for health protection, such as infectious diseases, and health promotion and prevention. Most public health preventative work is now delegated to local authorities, who plan and commission services such as health visiting, school nursing and health promotion programmes, like Change4Life. Public Health England is probably better known for its healthy living messages, such as stopping smoking and tackling obesity, and their role in preventing infectious diseases. However, they have a wider remit that includes improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.

Clinical Commissioning Groups

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are groups of local GPs and other clinical professionals who are responsible for planning and commissioning the health care services for the communities they cover. There are 221 CCGs covering England – meaning they do not always neatly overlap with local authorities. CCGs commission most of the NHS services we use such as emergency care (A&E, ambulance services), hospital care, and community services (nurses, therapies, mental health services).

CCGs do not directly provide the services that you may use – these are delivered by hospital and community trusts, or foundation trusts. However, CCGs are important because they decide, along with local authorities, where in your area the money is spent, based what the agreed local priorities are. Therefore, they are also responsible for making sure that the right services are available locally, that they are of sufficient quality, and that hospitals or trusts are providing the services they are commissioned to do.

Need advice?

Call our freephone helpline
0808 808 3555
helpline@cafamily.org.uk
Open Monday to Friday, 9.30am–5pm



Hospital and Community Trusts

Hospital and Community Trusts are known as 'service providers' as they are the organisations that directly provide NHS services to the public. They include hospitals, community services (nurses, therapists, wheelchair services and so on), mental health services and ambulance services. There is generally more than one trust in a local area and mental health services can be a separate trust, or provided by the local hospital or community trust. Many NHS trusts are a foundation trust which means that they are more independent and are accountable to their local community. NHS trusts and foundation trusts are monitored through NHS Improvement. You can find a list of all NHS trusts by visiting the NHS website.

Local authority role in the NHS

In addition to the Public Health work that is now local authority's responsibility, it may not be obvious that local councils also have a role in the NHS, but they are increasingly expected to be active in determining the health needs of their population. Each local authority has had to establish a Health and Wellbeing Board, where key health (usually CCG and Public Health) and social care leaders collaborate to better understand and plan for the needs of their local community. (See the Health and Wellbeing Board's briefing for more info).

Key Jargon

Primary, secondary and tertiary care

Terms that you may hear in relation to the NHS are primary care, secondary care and tertiary care. In simple terms it is about how you access the NHS and the level of specialist care you require.

Primary care is anything that you can directly access – GPs, dentist, pharmacy, walk-in centres.

Secondary care is where you would go if you need further care, for example hospitals or community trusts, but a referral from a Primary Care practitioner (for example a GP) is required.

Tertiary care is the specialist end of NHS care – the specialist hospitals, units or services that require a referral from a secondary care practitioner.

Commissioners plan and arrange the health services in their area, based on the identified needs of their local population. This is often done in partnership with local authorities.

Service providers are those organisations who provide the health services you receive directly, that have been arranged by the commissioners.

Who should our forum be influencing?

To make sure your local area is planning for and commissioning the right services for families with disabled children, you may seek to develop a strong working relationship with your local CCG(s). You can read more about how to do this, and learn from the experiences of other forums, in our *Toolkit for Parent Carer Forums – Engaging with Local Health Partners*.

If you prefer learning in a group to reading, your forum could also buy in a workshop for your members on how to engage with your local health partners, delivered by Contact a Family's staff and associates. You can use your core grant, or an additional discretionary grant, if available – discuss this with your regional Parent Carer Participation Adviser.

Nationally, Contact a Family and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums work closely with NHS England to ensure that CCGs understand and are able to engage parent carer forums in their work. Where there are obstacles to this we want to hear from you – please contact our Strategic Health Lead, Lynn Hoppenbrouwers with your feedback:

✉ Lynn.hoppenbrouwers@cafamily.org.uk

Got a question about the changes?
Call the Contact a Family freephone
helpline: 0808 808 3555
helpline@cafamily.org.uk
www.cafamily.org.uk



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