



GUIDANCE FOR FAITH GROUPS



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FaithAction is a **Health and Social Care Voluntary Sector Strategic Partner**, working with the **NHS England, Public Health England and Department of Health**. Since our involvement began back in 2009, it has become clear that the NHS needs to adapt and welcome the voices of those that it has struggled to engage with in the past.

At FaithAction, our role within the strategic partnership is to demonstrate and unlock the potential of faith groups and allow the NHS and faith groups to engage with each other. I therefore jumped at the chance to be involved with **NHS Citizen**.

NHS Citizen is here to give the public a say in the key decisions that affect how the NHS should be run. It is a great opportunity for those of faith and those who represent faith communities across the country to get involved in NHS decision-making and have a voice. Being of faith doesn't mean serving our own preferences; it means looking out into the communities in which we live and speaking out for the good of all. NHS Citizen is giving us the opportunity to have a voice into one of the biggest organisations in the world and ensuring that it is delivering something for everyone in our communities.

This guidance, pulled together by the FaithAction team and the NHS Citizen team, outlines how those of faith can get involved and change the system.

WHY SHOULD INDIVIDUALS BE INVOLVED AND HOW?

NHS Citizen is giving you a voice into how the NHS in England is run. It provides citizens in England with a way to raise healthcare issues, concerns and ideas with fellow citizens and NHS England, and have a say on how they are addressed.

FaithAction has been working with NHS Citizen since the beginning of the programme, and this guidance is especially for faith groups and individuals.

WHY?

The NHS makes decisions about health services that can affect us all... therefore, why not get involved and help shape them so they are accurate and represent the needs of your communities!

THE NHS IS TOO BIG... HOW CAN I CHANGE IT?

At FaithAction, we believe that faith groups and individuals have innovative ideas and often speak for those in their communities who are often under-represented and are inaccessible to statutory services.

Through NHS Citizen, the NHS are looking to highlight that it belongs to everybody and that new decisions to shape its strategy and actions are no longer decisions to be made by few managers. By being involved in NHS Citizen not only do you get the voice of you and your communities heard, but the board of NHS England has a responsibility to ensure that it is directly accountable to the people it serves – you. This is a key component in the NHS Constitution for England. NHS Citizen will make it possible for citizens to influence the NHS board's decision-making and hold the board to account.

MORE BACKGROUND PLEASE!

NHS Citizen emerged in 2013 as NHS England wanted to answer the two following questions:

- How can NHS England and the board listen to the public when making important decisions about the NHS?
- How can every citizen in the UK – those who work and use the NHS – take part in making sure NHS England was doing a good job and acting on what it was being told?

Following a period of public workshops with representatives from organisations, voluntary sector, NHS England and citizens, NHS Citizen was created, developed and implementation began.

HOW DO I TAKE PART?

It is so easy to get involved – just start an NHS Citizen conversation today. Here's how:

- Post an idea/issue or join an existing discussion at the NHS Citizen Gather about things other people have suggested – gather.nhscitizen.org.uk
- Join the discussion using social media – www.facebook.com/nhscitizen or tweet using #nhscitizen
- Run an NHS Citizen offline gather event with FaithAction supporting you – get in touch by contacting info@faithaction.net
- Sign up to the NHS Citizen mailing list from our website: www.nhscitizen.org.uk
- Tell us what you think! E-mail hello@nhscitizen.org.uk

WHAT HAPPENS IF I PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS?

Your views will be taken into consideration. Some issues are selected for the NHS Citizen Assembly twice a year. Others will be discussed and shared within NHS England.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED FURTHER?

It is possible to get more involved within the NHS; however, there can be potential barriers that you should be aware of.

Time, knowledge, and not knowing who to speak to are often a barrier to being involved. However, some of our FaithAction members have successfully become involved in making a difference locally. Here are some of our top tips for you based on our members' feedback:

- Get informed, decide how you want to be involved, and what areas you are particularly interested in.
- Learn how to put your points forward in a way in which they are likely to be acknowledged; offering a solution instead of focusing on a problem often helps!
- Go along to a local event, make a new friend, and then tell others about it.
- Be pro-active!
- Make sure your contributions, no matter how small, are noted so people know you were there!
- Be focused and clear on how you want to be involved, and ensure all of your communications and actions reflect this. Keep it focused to either your geographical area or one or two topics you are particularly interested in.
- Ask questions – and make genuine friends and connections!
- 'On the ground' experience is in short supply! This doesn't mean you need to know everything, but it helps if you can offer your point of view as a patient/user – this perspective is often very helpful.
- Do your homework; understand what is involved and the time commitment before you volunteer to get involved.
- Encourage your local communities to get involved in their GP surgery user groups – this is often a great place to start.