

# Healthy Debate

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Let's have some facts about the new Public and Patients' Forum system in England and the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) – not whisperings from unnamed 'sources' (Eye, 14 May. p.10).

The CPPIH had no shadow period and was set up from scratch last year. Despite that, we created a network of 572 forums across England, and recruited almost 5,000 volunteers by December 2003. We had many more applications than form places available, and I am delighted to work with such a set of highly-motivated and committed group of volunteers.

All this was done by a hard-working team in just 3 months. It was a huge achievement in itself and one that has been praised by many people – including the Department of Health.

The forums themselves have now been running for just 5 months and far from being hidden, they are busy making an impact in their local communities.

We have numerous examples of how they are already making a difference on the ground: from extending consultations on changes to emergency services, to intervening on plans to close mental health care services: from reflecting patients' concerns on bringing services back to local hospitals, to working with GPs on provision of physiotherapy services; not to mention becoming vital partners in ensuring a £10m hospital refurbishment scheme really meets patients' needs.

These are early days for such a ground-breaking and diffuse system for involving the public in health. One can only speculate as to why your informant should be so negative and ponder on the misinformation being peddled in your piece.

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