

Going through the motions of consultation

The timing and the manner of the consultation make it quite clear that NHS England wants simply to be seen to have gone through the motions of seeking public views. At least a third of the 12-week period to October 26 is consumed by school holidays, and Parliament too is in recess. Only the Christmas holiday period is more devoid of political activity and more distracted from normal concerns.

For the remaining time, NHS England – like a giant parody of so many spurious local “consultations” – proposes to hold just FOUR [consultation events](#), all in mid-September, in London, Leeds, Exeter and Birmingham. Anyone living any distance from these carefully stage-managed events, for which prior registration is required, will simply be ignored.

The document has been quietly lodged on the NHS England website; it seems that no copies are being distributed, and there is no obvious sign of any media campaign to make sure the wider public is even aware questions are being asked.

Indeed the densely-worded, slippery and misleading 40-page [consultation document](#) concludes with 12 questions which few members of the public and a minority of active campaigners would feel confident to handle – and offers little scope for those with wider and deeper concerns about the fragmented, market-style system consolidated by the 2012 Health & Social Care Act.

Health Campaigns Together will continue to challenge the legitimacy of the consultation, and support alternative ways in which campaigners at local regional and national level seek to get their views across outside of the narrow responses sought by the consultation document.

But we also urge campaigners as individuals and locally not to allow NHS England to claim widespread acceptance or “apathy” on these important issues.