



Summary version of citizen's jury – plain English summary

Citizen's Jury: Persistent Pain Management

Introduction

A Citizens' Jury is a way of getting members of the public involved in making decisions. It brings together people from different backgrounds to learn about an issue, talk about possible solutions, and come up with ideas to help.

Health Innovation North East and North Cumbria (HI NENC) ran a Citizens' Jury to involve people, some of whom are living with long term pain, to help improve NHS care.

People living in the North East and North Cumbria were invited to apply to take part. A mix of people were selected to listen to experts, talk about the issues, and come up with suggestions for how the NHS could do better.

Our region has some of the highest use of strong painkillers (like opioids) in the country. This shows we need to find better ways to support people with long-term pain.

Aim

A group of 14 people, were brought together to talk about what matters in their community. Their job was to come up with ideas to help the NHS give better support to people living with long term pain.

How it was done

Expert group

A group of 15 experts helped guide the project. This group included NHS staff, university researchers, people with lived experience, and people from charities and community groups.

Together, they came up with the question for the jury to answer:

How do we achieve a shift away from medical intervention, in order to better support people who live with persistent pain?"

In other words:

"How can we move away from using medical treatments, and instead give better support to people living with long-term pain?"

Choosing the jury

More than 300 people applied to take part. 14 people were chosen who represented different parts of the North East and North Cumbria.



In the end, 13 people completed the full process.

What the Jury did

Online learning sessions

The jury took part in three online sessions. They heard from experts who shared different views and evidence about living with and treating long-term pain. These sessions helped the jurors learn more about the issues and feel confident to make good decisions.

In-person sessions

The jury then met in person for two more sessions. They used what they had learned to discuss the issues and come up with ideas to improve NHS care and reduce the need for strong painkillers.

What they decided

The jury agreed on six main recommendations (ideas), which were then shared with the expert group.

Recommendations

- 1 A public campaign** to show people they are not alone with pain. Use the message "remove the 'I' in pain" and share information about local services that can help.
- 2 Better training** for healthcare staff, including students and people already working. This should include how to understand and treat pain in a way that looks at the whole person – their body, mind, and life.
- 3 Create support hubs** for people with pain. These would be places you can visit, mobile services for rural areas, and online support.
- 4 Treat long-term pain as a health condition** on its own. Create clear pathways to get help earlier. Make sure people in poorer areas get better healthcare and support so they can stay in work or return to work faster.
- 5 Keep the conversation going.** Jurors who want to stay involved should meet with NHS decision-makers every few months to check on progress.
- 6 Set up a National Pain Institute.** This group would bring together experts and people with lived experience to collect data, improve care, and make sure health services are doing what they should.

Conclusion

The recommendations from the Citizens' Jury will be shared in summer 2025. They will help shape how the NHS supports people with long-term pain in the North East and North Cumbria.

This Citizens' Jury shows how important it is to listen to people in the community, especially those who live with pain. By working together, we can create a more caring and effective way to help those who need it most.

