



**AWARENESS:** The organisation Dying Matters is urging people to plan for death with loved ones

# Think ahead to plan your future

**T**HIS month marks Dying Matters Awareness Week, which will be happening between May 13 and 19. Some people might not be aware of this awareness week, and some might even choose to avoid thinking about it.

It is this tendency to look away or to put off thinking about death and dying that has made these awareness weeks so important.

After all, we might reasonably ask ourselves: why should we think about death, when we just want to get on with our lives?

And yet, in our daily lives, we rarely take the time to consider what is important to us, where we find meaning, or even how we truly feel at any one time.

Planning what might happen when we die is an important part of making the most of the time we have to live.

Dying Matters Awareness Week aims to encourage us to talk about and plan for our

**By Barbara Gale,  
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death. The organisation that came up with the concept – Dying Matters – is asking us to consider what we would like our last words to be. Would they be something poignant, something loving or something funny?

Thinking about and planning before death not only helps us to think about our own lives more carefully, but it can also really help relatives that are left behind. If you leave a plan or suggestions about what you would like after you die, it can give them confidence about difficult decisions and relieve some of the stress during that period.

You might consider how you would like your funeral to be. Do you want people to mourn or celebrate? Wear black or something pink? Have a party or a picnic? What is your favourite piece of music and would you like it played at the ceremony?

How will the people there remember you and what was that last witty, caring or profound thing that you said?

Why not share some of your thoughts about your final words by using Twitter with the hashtag #FinalTweets or you could post your ideas on Facebook and share it with your friends and family.

■ For more information online, go to [www.dyingmatters.org/](http://www.dyingmatters.org/)

## Help is at hand

**AS part of Dying Matters awareness week St Nicholas Hospice Care will be holding an information event at the Burton Centre in Haverhill on Wednesday, May 15 between 10am and 12.30pm.**

**The Hospice is planning to develop its first Hospice community centre at the Burton Centre to try to reach more people locally.**

**There will be an information display and one of the senior nurses will be there to answer questions.**

# GPs join forces to preserve quality of care in county

GPs across Ipswich and east Suffolk have joined forces and decided to fight together under one standard to preserve the commitment, passion and quality of Suffolk's primary care.

## Why do we need to do this?

You might think that since GPs are the driving force behind CCGs that general practice has nothing to fear.

The problem is that CCGs are really committed local foot soldiers who have to obey orders from the generals at NHS England.

They have commanded a 'tender process' for a mass of primary care that is the bread and butter work of practices across the county. Services like flu-jabs, learning disability medicals and health checks won't be offered to practices unless they win the contract.

Private companies are much more adept at writing tender documents than GPs who struggle even to write prescriptions! So insisting on competitive tenders could result in services being stripped away from general practices who might then struggle to survive.

## A GP's diagnosis by John Havard of Saxmundham Health



This long march could involve redundancies, reduced services and then further loss of income prior to possible bankruptcy.

The reduced services phase would be particularly damaging since patients would need to go to hospital more for primary care procedures like blood tests, ECGs, dressings and nursing care including currently underfunded tests like spirometry for breathing problems.

This would be a massive retreat! So it must be realised that surrendering to the private companies could have desperate implications for Suffolk people.

We need to get our heads around this now and re-arm – and not when it is too late!

## So what is the counter-attack strategy?

Suffolk GPs have always operated

independently. The Federation idea was proposed by the Royal College of GPs as a way of sharing resources to tackle the big issues together while not interfering with the traditional care in the consulting room.

The model has been sensitively applied to Ipswich and east Suffolk to preserve the best of general practice recognising that we have to play by the rules that the generals have decreed.

## What will this mean?

It means that the Suffolk Federation will prepare bids for the primary care services that will now have to be tendered.

The contracts will be managed by our Federation to ensure that quality care is delivered across the patch.

This may involve sharing some expert staff to deliver particular

services but we have the capacity and depth of talent already in the workforce.

It is very much hoped that GPs in the west will also want to join so we can have representation for all Suffolk GPs.

## Is this all a money-making enterprise for the GPs?

This is really about damage limitation not new income since practice incomes are falling and are destined to fall further.

The Suffolk Federation is NOT going to be a limited company but a not-for-profit Community Interest Company owned by all the GPs and run in a democratic way so each practice has one vote.

We do hope this strategy will help primary care to thrive and not wither which will be for the benefit of all the residents of Suffolk.

## What can the Suffolk GP Federation do attract new GPs to Suffolk?

Now all 40 of the Ipswich and East Suffolk general practices have joined together in this 'not for

profit' Federation, there is a real opportunity to strengthen primary care in Suffolk.

Working together will help the group find solutions to some major challenges threatening General Practice which include GP recruitment and retention.

In Suffolk every fourth practice is missing a whole time equivalent GP. Without vibrant well staffed GP surgeries we will be unable to deliver the new commissioning ideas being implemented by the Clinical Commissioning Boards.

The Federation hope to encourage more GPs into Suffolk whilst finding ways of keeping those we have! Nearly a quarter of the county's work force is over 55 years and we don't want to lose these experienced doctors. The Federation is developing attractive positions for young GPs that will involve academic work with UEA or UCS and a spell abroad in either New Zealand or Australia before they hopefully settle in Suffolk. The Federation is committed to improving standards and it is recognised that this will require both hard and imaginative work.