

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) - Decisions and Actions Required

Decisions

1. *This paper updates the Board on latest developments with Local Involvement Networks. It also serves as context to a presentation to the Board by Dave Shields. Dave is Health and Wellbeing Strategy Manager at Southampton City Council and will outline the work Southampton is doing to set up their LINK.*

Actions Required

2. *The Board is asked to:-*
 - *Receive the policy update paper and presentation by Dave Shields*
 - *Debate issues raised to inform the Community Well-being Team's ongoing work on LINKs*

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Local Involvement Networks

Summary

1. *Following Royal Assent of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill on 30 October every local authority with a social services remit is under a statutory duty to make arrangements for Local Involvement Network (LINk) activities to be carried out. This briefing provides an update on:*
 - *Final changes to the legislation prior to it receiving Royal Assent*
 - *Funding arrangements*
 - *Work LGA officers are doing on LINks*

Background

2. *The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act updates the system of patient and public involvement in England. It abolishes Patient and Public Involvement Forums and the national organisation that supported their work, the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health. The Act establishes LINks to replace PPI Forums and requires each local authority to contract a 'host' organisation to set up and support their area's LINk. As set out in the Act, LINks will:*
 - *Promote and support local people getting involved in the commissioning and provision of all local care services – whether local authority of NHSrun (or financed)*
 - *Enable local people to monitor and review the commissioning and provision of these services*
 - *Gather the views of local people on their needs and experiences of care services*
 - *Make these views known via reports and recommendations to those responsible for care services*

Changes to legislation

3. *LINks were originally intended to 'go live' on 1 April 2008. However, during debate on the Bill concern was raised that some local authorities would not have procured their 'host' organisation by that time. Although the likelihood is that only a small number of authorities will be in this position, the Government amended the Bill so that, where a council does not have a 'host' in place, it will be under a duty to ensure LINks activities are carried out by other means.*
4. *This duty will be temporary and the Department of Health anticipate it lasting until a council has a LINk in place or 30 September, 2008 – whichever is earlier. The Secretary of State will make regulations for these transitional arrangements, which will detail the*

period of time for which they apply and the activities that will be required of councils who do not have a host in place by 1 April 2008. The regulations are expected in November.

5. *Other developments following final debate on the Bill include:*

- *The provision for LINKs to cooperate on a local, regional and national basis as a means of undertaking their core activities*
- *Agreement for further regulations regarding LINKs' governance arrangements. This will cover matters including conflicts of interest and the use of money*
- *Agreement for guidance to clarify LINKs' 'right to visit'*

Funding arrangements

6. *The Government has announced that, for April 2008 – March 2011, £84 million will be made available to support the national and local running of LINKs. In terms of individual allocations each area will receive a baseline amount of £60,000 per annum plus an additional amount according to its size and demography. The funding will be available via an annual targeted non-ring fenced area-based grant to authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Allocations are expected to be announced in mid-November.*

7. *In August this year the Department of Health gave every local authority with a LINKs responsibility £10,000. This was to assist councils in the planning and procurement of their area's 'host' organisation.*

Work LGA officers are doing on LINKs

8. *Officers have circulated the first of a regular newsletter to each authority's LINKs 'named contact'. This contains information on latest developments and sign-posting to sources of further support and advice.*

9. *In addition to this the newsletter also seeks practitioner views on:*

- *The Department of Health's consultation on the regulations for LINKs, to support the LGA's response*
- *Whether or not problems are being encountered in respect of TUPE for PPI Forum Support Organisation employees moving to new 'Host' organisations*

10. *We have also requested for practitioners to volunteer themselves as expert advisers for the LGA. This is to ensure we keep a firm grip on LINKs issues as the networks begin to take shape across the country and to help us gather best practice to share with all colleagues working on LINKs.*

11. *The newsletter will be a key communications tool for the LGA to liaise with LINKs practitioners. As experience of setting up LINKs continues and 'lessons learned' begin to emerge LGA officers will seek to capture such knowledge in an article (or series of articles) in First, the association's weekly news magazine.*

Implications for Wales

12. *None.*

Financial/ Resource Implications

13. *None.*

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