

Getting ready for LINKs

Local Involvement Networks Bulletin

Issue 7 – November 2007 Gateway ref: 9026

About this bulletin

Welcome to the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Bulletin

This bulletin has been developed to keep you informed of the latest developments on plans to introduce LINKs.

This bulletin will be of particular interest to:

- > NHS staff involved in Patient & Public Involvement, especially PPI leads
- > Local Government staff working on user involvement and the procurement of ‘host’ organisations for LINKs;
- > Voluntary and community sector organisations who are interested in providing a ‘host’ service to the new LINKs or becoming a member of a LINK, including those that provide forum support services;
- > Current PPI Forum members;

- > Health and social care regulatory bodies with PPI interests; and
- > Members of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Please feel free to circulate this bulletin to colleagues, display it on relevant notice boards or publish it on your internal intranet sites.

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Voice piece

Legislation heralds fresh approach to local accountability

Health Minister, Ann Keen MP

The Royal Assent of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act heralds a fresh approach to giving local people a greater say over local health and social care services.

For sometime, citizens have told Government that they want a greater influence over the commissioning and running of services. The care sector also knows that listening to service users results in responsive services, better equipped to meet local health needs.

The current system of Patients' Forums has helped to improve services but it has also suffered from limitations. Too few people are asked for their views and services do not always listen.

I strongly believe that the measures contained in the new Act could help to address this situation.

Having just one Local Involvement Network in every area - with the remit to ask citizens what they think, to investigate specific issues and to hold all publicly funded care services to

account - should make it easier for communities and professionals to talk.

A new duty for PCTs to report actions they are taking as a result of public feedback, should also make the system clearer and increase peoples' confidence that their opinions count.

We have an opportunity to build on the good work of Patients' Forums, improving accountability and promoting an open, ongoing dialogue between care services and the communities they serve.

I would like to thank all of you who have been working hard to get ready for LINKs. I know that the success of this venture depends on the efforts of the whole community and therefore responsibility lies with every one of us.

News in brief

Latest developments on LINKs

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill: Royal Assent

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill received Royal Assent on 30th October.

The legislation will abolish Patients' Forums (as well as the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health) and will lead to the establishment of one LINK per local authority area from April 2008.

In addition to setting out the role of LINKs, the Act introduces a requirement for PCTs and local authorities to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which will describe the future health and wellbeing needs of their local populations. The JSNA will help local authorities and PCTs decide how to meet local needs and provide services through their next local area agreements.

The legislation also gives PCTs and SHAs a new statutory duty to respond to local people, explaining the activities they are undertaking because of what people have said throughout the year.

£84 million to support LINKs

The Government has also announced that it is making £84million available from 2008 - 2011 to support the national programme for the establishment of LINKs. Most of this funding will go to local authorities. The funding that each area receives will depend on factors such as population and deprivation. Details will be announced shortly.

Transition arrangements

During the Parliamentary debate, concerns were expressed that, on the 1st of April 2008, a few local authorities might be in a position where they have not appointed a host organisation to set up and run a LINK.

To make their obligations clear if such a case were to occur; the Government chose to amend the Bill. Now if, by the 1st of April, a local authority has not yet established contractual arrangements through which LINK activities can be carried out, it will be under a duty to make sure that the activities are carried out by other means until formal LINK arrangements are in place.

The Government will publish regulations stipulating the time-period for which these transitional arrangements can apply, and the activities which local authorities will be expected to carry out during this period.

It is currently envisaged that the transitional period of six months would be appropriate.

The Department will soon write to local authorities with more details on transition arrangements. The Department will also urge local authority leads to make contact with their current Patients' Forums.

Consultation reminder

We reported in the last LINKs bulletin about the three-month Department of Health consultation on the draft regulations for LINKs.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act empowers the Secretary of State to introduce secondary legislation to ensure that LINKs can hold local care services to account.

These proposals include:

- > Placing a duty on service providers to provide LINKs with information they request;
- > Placing a duty on commissioners to respond within a certain timeframe to reports and recommendations made by LINKs;
- > Placing a duty on service providers to allow members of LINKs to enter and view services; and
- > Enabling LINKs to refer issues to a local authority Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for action.

The draft regulations, which set out how the duties will work in practice, have been published in a document called 'Have your say - Consultation on the regulations for Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)'. This document sets out the regulations, explains how they will work and asks for your views.

The consultation will end on the 21st December 2007

To download the document visit www.dh.gov.uk/consultations

LAAs progressing well

A poll of local authority LINK leads, carried out in early September, indicates that many authorities are progressing well in terms of getting ready for LINKs.

Of the 30 leads who responded:

- > 96% said they were using the

guidance issued by the Department of Health

- > 86% said they had set up a working group of key stakeholders
- > 86% said they already knew of local organisations who might be interested in tendering to be a host

'Questions to ask' materials

Helping patients and health professionals get the most out of a medical consultation is the main aim behind the publication of *Question To Ask* leaflets.

Published by the Department of Health, they provide tips and suggested questions to help patients and carers take a more active role in decision making and improve their knowledge of their own health.

Leaflets in a range of formats and languages are available, together with information posters, free of charge. These are being distributed to all GPs and pharmacists by the end of October. Further information and details on how to order *Questions to Ask* leaflets is available via

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationPolicyAndGuidance/DH_079531

Learning from the EAP programme – Final Report

The Early Adopter Project (EAP) Final Evaluation Report will soon be published.

In addition to a full report, an easy read version and a summary of key learning, individual case studies from each site will be produced. The report will be published on the NHS Centre for Involvement website at www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk

In focus

Local Authority events – Round-up

Councils that provide social care services will receive money from the Department of Health to commission an independent 'host' organisation to set-up and support a LINK for three years.

During October 2007, the Centre for Public Scrutiny hosted four 'Get ready for LINKs' events to help councils prepare. Held in London, Leeds, Bristol and Birmingham, each authority was invited to send three delegates (an executive, non executive and community representative) to the event in their region.

Practical actions

Delegates were asked to identify practical steps that they intended to take as a result of attending the events. Examples cited included:

- > Book a placement with an advisor from CfPS
- > Convene a multi-agency LINK working group to inform procurement

- > Consult with other councils about jointly procuring a Host
- > Arranging a local 'getting ready for LINKs' event
- > Widening out consultation about planning for a LINK
- > Develop an implementation plan for the local LINK
- > Get further advice about TUPE regulations
- > Thinking about how Oversight and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) and LINKs can work together
- > Identifying 'success criteria' for the host and the LINK
- > Asking the Health OSC to review progress
- > Raise awareness within councils and in the community, as well as building on current involvement work

Delegates had the opportunity to visit workshops themed around: understanding the rationale for LINKs and who to talk to about setting up a LINK ; understanding the skills needed by Hosts and the timescale for commissioning a Host; building relationships between the executive, the Host, the LINK and the OSC

The rationale for LINKs and knowing who to talk to

Recommendations from this workshop included:

- > having a clear communications plan to raise local awareness of LINKs
- > using a variety of ways to reach out to communities

- > find out who talks to the 'hard to hear' and work with them
- > speak to Forum members about their skills and experiences of PPI
- > develop strategies to avoid LINKs becoming about 'us and them'
- > make sure that community groups and networks help to plan the LINK
- > be aware of risks of duplicating existing networks and plan to avoid this
- > build on the existing mechanisms for consulting communities
- > help people to have realistic expectations about what can be achieved
- > plan for 'inclusive and accessible' LINKs rather than 'representatives'
- > encourage LINKs to work with neighbours to consider common issues
- > think about the role of LINK with core standards, CPA
- > encourage NHS and authorities to work together with LINKs - don't forget its about health and social care
- > learn from experiences of the Early Adopter Projects
- > develop a sense for what 'doing LINKs well' will look like
- > be clear about the separate arrangements for children's social care
- > start to think about constitutions/codes of conduct/governance
- > help people to focus on 'what is it like to live around here?'
- > make sure the LINK stays in touch with people about the work it does

Commissioning a host

Recommendations from this workshop included:

- > deciding quickly who is the council lead for LINKs and letting people know
- > considering whether Hosts should be work differently from Forum Support Organisations
- > establishing whether the Host should be part of LINK too
- > developing clear performance criteria for Hosts and decide who should have a say in monitoring performance
- > developing an 'exit strategy' in case the Host doesn't perform well
- > minimising potential conflicts of interest
- > ask potential Hosts about their knowledge of local communities and their ideas about how they will attract people to take part in the LINK
- > agree whether TUPE regulations apply and build this in if necessary
- > contact similar councils to develop model contracts
- > decide if developing a LINK 'model' is the council's job or the Host's job
- > aim to meet the deadline for procuring a Host by April 2008
- > have a contingency plan in case there is no Host by April 2008

Building relationships

Recommendations from this workshop included:

- > taking time to understand different

roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

- > get each party to nominate a 'contact person' to ease communication
- > recognising that developing a LINK takes time
- > making time to build relationships - use informal opportunities
- > begin to anticipate how OSCs and Links can work effectively together
- > thinking about referrals to OSCs and manage expectations about workloads
- > putting together an agreement for joint working between OSCs and Links
- > planning joint training events about health and care services
- > talking about how LINKs can inform Local Area agreements
- > developing relationships with statutory health and well-being partnerships

Delegates raised a number of questions at the events. The Department is in the process of answering these questions.

Further information:

The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health produced a Scope of Work to identify the activity carried out by Forum Support Organisations and a Pre Qualifying Questionnaire used within the procurement process. You can source both from the following link <http://www.cppih.org/Scopeofwork.htm>.

Information about TUPE regulations can be found on the IDeA website at: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=6908271>

Information about the OJEU and Public Procurement Thresholds is available on the OJEU website http://www.ojec.com/Help/Help_OJEU.aspx

The Office of Government Commerce website also has information and advice about procurement: <http://www.ogc.gov.uk/>

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply also has information about the procurement process here: <http://www.cips.org/>

Diary

NHS awards

The NHS Centre for Involvement (NCI) will be holding its first national conference, "Involvement to Impact" on the 28th and 29th November 2007 at the New Connaught Rooms in Holborn, London. As part of this conference, NCI will be presenting the first awards for Patient and Public Involvement across the NHS in England.

The purpose of these awards is to showcase evidence based examples of Patient and Public Involvement across the NHS that have had a real impact on the experience of patients. There are seven award categories focusing on specific areas

for involvement in the NHS.

These awards raise the profile of Patient and Public Empowerment across the NHS in England. They recognise areas of evidence based best practice that can be universally heard amongst other organisations and they demonstrate effective involvement of patients, users and carers as equal partners in health service planning, design and evaluation of new and existing services.

For more information about this event and the awards, please visit:

www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk

Further Information

To find out more about Links

Visit:

www.dh.gov.uk/patientpublicinvolvement

To get more Patient and Public Involvement resources

Visit: www.library.nhs.uk/ppi

To find out more about current patient involvement practice or the LINKs early adopter sites visit:

www.cppih.org or
www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk
www.cfps.org.uk

Contact us

Help shape this bulletin

We welcome your ideas and comments that will shape the format and content of this bulletin in the future. This bulletin is published on a monthly basis. Please email: ppimailbox@dh.gsi.gov.uk or write to the PPI Policy Team, Room 502A, Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH.