

## THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH BILL 2006-07

**Report By: Director of Adult and Community Services**

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1. To brief Members about the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006-07, especially as it relates to the introduction and development of Local Involvement Networks (which will replace existing Public and Patient Involvement Forums).

### Financial implications

2. None identified.

### Background

3. Introduced by Secretary Ruth Kelly, Department of Communities and Local Government, 13 December 2006, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. aims to
  - make provision for local involvement networks (LINKs);
  - abolish Patients' Forums and the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH);
  - make provision with respect to local consultation in connection with health services and for connected purposes;
  - provide new powers for Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) to review and scrutinise the actions of public service providers.
4. Government published an implementation plan for the Local Government White Paper in January after its second reading. The Bill will enact in October 07 much of the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' White Paper, and follows 'A Stronger Local Voice' consultation. The Bill's Section 11 involves new arrangements for scrutiny and for patient/public involvement.

### Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)

5. LINKs will supercede PPIFs. They will have powers to refer concerns to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and request committees to take concerns up. Local authorities and NHS bodies will not be allowed to host LINKs or influence their operation. LINKs will have wider membership, and a remit to cover social care institutions as well as health ones.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from Sara Siloko, Directorate Services Officer (Health)  
on 01432 261804

6. Government has changed its mind since publication of 'A Stronger Local Voice' to give LINKs powers of inspection of NHS premises – which they did not have to begin with (letter from Rosie Winterton to CPPIH, Nov 06).
7. The Local Government Association has raised concerns that there is no robust mechanism in place to manage a dysfunctional LINK, nor any budget disclosed to cover new burdens to the council of procurement, contract monitoring and running costs of the host and LINK.
8. PPIFs will be kept on until LINKs can be established. PALS will continue. Government currently envisages a team of trained specialists who would have access, so not everyone (assuming a group of 500-600 people are involved in each LINK) would need CRB checks. LINKs will be set up by local authorities.

### **Timetable**

9. According to the Government's implementation plan and assuming the Bill receives royal assent in autumn 07:
  - Mar 08 LINKs established
  - Apr 08 New overview and scrutiny powers introduced and guidance produced
  - Apr 08 Community governance package introduced  
Community Call for Action powers introduced
  - Apr 09 Introduce new duty to involve local people

### **Early Adopters**

10. Seven 'early adopter' sites are now trying out LINKs. Of these (Co. Durham, Doncaster, Dorset, Manchester, Hertfordshire, Kensington & Chelsea, Medway), Dorset and Durham have done most, as of March 07.

#### *Dorset*

- Has set up a steering group to meet monthly with terms of reference and a project plan.
- Project plan will: Test how a LINK can promote involvement in health and social care, focusing on inclusiveness; collate and analyse views; convey findings; determine structures and governance; develop options for 'host' specification, communications and resourcing/support levels needed; evaluate effective relationships with stakeholders; assess accountability; training.

#### *Durham*

- Held a public event to attract a group to shape its LINK on 2 March.
- Early meetings have identified issues to be resolved as: relationship between LINK and host; how to address sub-regional, regional and national issues; how specialised services are considered; inspection and monitoring rights; training, governance and support; Local Authority commissioning of 'host'; LINK relationships with scrutiny committees and others.

11. A visit to Dorset is recommended partly because their context is more similar to ours and partly because they seem to have moved fastest to implement an in-depth LINK study. We would have more to learn from them than from Durham at this stage. The other early adopters have not posted any activity on the above website.

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## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT Members visit the Dorset LINK early adopter site**

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

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(Health)  
on 01432 261804

## APPENDIX A

## HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS FOR OSCS AND PPIFS

**Strengthening overview and scrutiny committees**

- Local Authorities to consider response to overview and scrutiny recommendations as soon as possible (within two months)
- Committees to consider Community Calls for Action and petitions
- Committees will be able to compel public service providers to appear before them (except the Police)
- Committees will be able to make recommendations to public bodies
- Local Authorities to be encouraged to focus on overview and scrutiny on more strategic issues

**Giving local people more say in running local services**

Local Authorities to;

- expand the best value regime to include participation of citizens in Local Authority activities
- inform citizens using good accessible information
- consult citizens about shape of local services & involve citizens in design, delivery or assessment of services
- devolve responsibility for delivery of services to citizens
- have greater citizen intelligence\*
- Local Authorities will also have a duty to secure citizens' participation\*

\*These to be measured by Audit Commission

**Giving people a new right to an answer when they put forward suggestions or demand action from their local authorities**

- Local Authorities to consider how to deal systematically with petitions
- Citizens to have right to Community Call for Action (CCfA)
- Councillors to be given local budgets to resolve issues
- Local Authorities to consider how much power and budgets to be devolved to councillors to deal with problems
- Issues raised by CCfAs to be investigated by Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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