

7th March 2012**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY
COUNCIL****TRANSITION FROM LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINK) TO LOCAL
HEALTHWATCH****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the:
 - . continuation of the Nottinghamshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) until the launch of the Nottinghamshire Local HealthWatch (LHW) in April 2013
 - . establishment of the new Local HealthWatch and complaints advocacy services.

Information and Advice**Background**

1. Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) aim to give citizens a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. They are run by local volunteers and groups and are independently supported. In Nottinghamshire, the contract to support the LINK was awarded to Carers' Federation, and commenced on 1st April 2008. Local authorities have an obligation to discharge their statutory responsibilities to support LINK, as set out in Sections 221 and 222 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007).
3. The White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* sets out a vision for a new patient and public involvement organisation, HealthWatch. Nationally, HealthWatch England (HWE) will be an independent committee of the Care Quality Commission and Local HealthWatch organisations will take on the activities of LINKs, together with some additional functions. Proposals for the establishment of HealthWatch are being taken forward in the Health and Social Care Bill which remains subject to Parliamentary approval.
2. On 3rd January 2012, the Secretary of State for Health announced a new start date for Local HealthWatch of 1st April 2013, supporting the need for close alignment with the establishment of other new bodies, such as Health and Wellbeing Boards; and enables HealthWatch England (to be established in October 2012) to provide leadership and support.
3. It was reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) on 11th January 2012 that HealthWatch affects the work of the HWB and the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing

Strategy by making sure that the views of the public and people who use services are taken into account. The report recommended that robust links are made with the future HealthWatch Board, which should receive the HWS and have regard to the strategy in its plans, and vice versa. It also recommended that all commissioning groups review their patient and public engagement in conjunction with HealthWatch or LINK.

Vision for Local HealthWatch

6. Local HealthWatch will be the independent consumer champion for health and social care, and will be representative of the diverse communities served by local government. It will provide intelligence - including evidence from people's views and experiences - to influence the policy, planning, commissioning and delivery of publicly-funded health and social care. It will also provide information and advice to help people access and make choices about services as well as provide – directly or through an agreed third party arrangement – independent complaints advocacy to support people if they need help to complain about NHS services.
7. Local HealthWatch will be a robust and credible player in the local health and social care economy by demonstrating that it has the appropriate level of skills and competencies required to deliver its statutory functions to the highest possible level. It will gain the trust of the general public as well as other health and social care stakeholder groups by being responsive and acting on concerns when things go wrong.
8. It will operate effectively and efficiently so that the local authority can demonstrate value for money against an agreed set of outcomes.

Functions of Local HealthWatch

9. Local HealthWatch will:
 - . Gather views and understanding the experiences of patients and the public
 - . Make people's views known to health and social care commissioners
 - . Promote and support the involvement of people in commissioning and provision of local care services and how they are scrutinised
 - . Recommend investigation or special review of services via HealthWatch England or directly to the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
 - . Provide advice and information (signposting) about access to services and support for making informed choices
 - . Make the views and experiences of people known to HealthWatch England (and to other local HealthWatch organisations) and providing a steer to help it carry out its role as national champion
 - . Undertake NHS Complaints Advocacy.

LINK Hosting

4. The LINK management contract with Carers' Federation (CF) expires on 31st March 2012. Approvals are being sought to extend their contract until 31st March 2013 in line with the new start date of Local HealthWatch, to ensure continuity of service to the LINK and a smooth transition to LHW.

5. It is not proposed to implement a 'shadow' arrangement prior to the start of Local HealthWatch on 1st April 2013. Such an arrangement is likely to result in duplication and lack of clarity over responsibilities between the departing LINK and incoming Local HealthWatch, and would not secure the best use of the resources available to run the services.

Transition from LINK to Local HealthWatch

12. National guidance suggests that the transition to LHW is managed by LINK establishing itself as a corporate body which could then employ its own staff, as well as continue the LINK legacy of recruiting volunteers, and be subject to public sector duties.
13. In common with other parts of the country, Nottinghamshire LINK expressed concerns about the new responsibilities associated with this corporate body role, which could detract from their experience as volunteers and cause future volunteer recruitment challenges.
14. As a result, Nottinghamshire LINK has formally decided that they wish to be an 'independent collaborator' under Local HealthWatch, to allow volunteers to focus on their areas of interest. A separate host organisation would be sought through a competitive process, and the successful bidder would be required to work with the body of volunteers to drive and deliver Local HealthWatch. A draft tender specification is being developed on this basis and will take into account a template specification currently being developed by the LGA. LINK will be invited to view and make comments on the service specification once it is drafted and discussed with Members.
15. Nottinghamshire LINK has been invited to lead the development of a skills and competences framework for volunteers under Local HealthWatch.
16. Establishment of suitable governance structures will be included in the specification, with instruction on which bodies must be represented. There is no guidance on representation, but suggestions include:
- Nottinghamshire County Council
 - District and borough council Members
 - Representatives of the voluntary and community organisations
 - Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
 - Lay Board members from Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)
 - Carers
 - The Youth Parliament (supported by the Youth Service).
17. Regional procurement or a joint exercise with Nottingham City Council has been explored but ruled out due to the need to maintain a focus on Nottinghamshire residents because of diverse needs in the districts. A joint approach with the City could result in loss of focus on variation within Nottinghamshire. However, close working links with the City during the tender process and operation of Local HealthWatch will be critical to ensure a joined up approach to cross border and common issues.

Engagement of health sector bodies

18. An engagement and communication strategy will be developed, outlining activity on the key transitional messages to take place with:

- PALS and Patient & Public Involvement managers and staff
- Primary Care Trusts
- Hospital Trusts
- NHS Complaints
- Clinical Commissioning Groups.

19. Communications officers from these bodies will be involved in this work.

Statutory and Policy Implications

This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board approves the:

- 0) composition of the membership of the future Local HealthWatch Board
- 0) proposal for a health sector engagement and communication strategy
- 0) action plan detailed in **Appendix A** (Local HealthWatch Implementation Plan).

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Constitutional Comments (LMc 03/02/2012)

20. The recommendations in the report fall within the remit of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Financial Comments (RWK 03/02/2012)

21. None

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- a. 17th January 2012 - Letter from Local Government Association, "LGA/DH HealthWatch Implementation Programme: Offer of Support to Local Authorities".

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

HWB29