
Meeting of the Cabinet - 10th September 2008

Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Local Involvement Network (LINKs) in Dudley

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Cabinet on developments to date in establishing a Local Involvement Network (LINK) including awarding to Shaw Trust the provider contract to operate in Dudley.

Background

2. In July 2006, the Department of Health (DH) published 'A Stronger Local Voice' which sought to consolidate and improve consultation and engagement arrangements in health and social care through the establishment of LINKs. This included the abolition of the Patients Forums. It was a requirement of the Guidance that local Health overview and scrutiny oversee the scrutiny process and there have been a series of formal reports to Dudley's Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee during 2007/08.
3. All Local Authorities were required to procure an organisation or "Host" to establish and support a LINK following the passing of the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Bill 2007 (Section 223).
4. The grant allocated to the Council for the LINK is provided by the Government over a three-year period:

2008/09- £173,000
2009/10-£173,000
2010/11- £172000
Total = £518,000

Arrangements beyond 2011 are not known at this point.

5. Work was undertaken to raise awareness in Dudley amongst local people engaged in health and social care in the following ways:
 - an event held in November 2007 in co-operation with the Dudley Community and Voluntary Sector Network
 - establishment of an initial Reference Group of people from the voluntary and community sector involved in health and care issues, the membership of which was derived from the November 07 event
 - subsequent development of a Project / Transitional Group with colleagues from the community and voluntary sector to assist with the procurement process

- two members of the voluntary and community sector sat on the Procurement Panel
 - The Dudley Health and Well-Being Partnership have also been kept informed of developments
6. Following the procurement process in 2008, in Dudley, five organisations submitted tenders to be the Host organisation. Interviews were held on 24th June and the Panel selected the Shaw Trust.
 7. There has been a duty to ensure that LINK activities are carried out until the provider is recruited. In light of this we accordingly established 'transitional arrangements' in February in the form of a Transitional Group comprising voluntary sector and community representatives including Dudley Women's forum, Dudley Carers forum and Halesowen Asian Elderly Association and this has been externally facilitated by DOSTI. The Transitional Group was established in February 2008 and has met, bi-monthly.
 8. Shaw Trust will create and support the Local Involvement Network to:
 - promote and support the involvement of people in commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local health and care services
 - enable local people to monitor and review the standard of local health and care services and report on how they could be improved
 - obtain the views of local people about their experience of local health and care services and their care needs.
 9. The role of LINKs embraces NHS and social care commissioning and provision.
 10. LINKs will be required to have a clear governance structure including:
 - the process for decision-making;
 - how LINKs members are authorised to act on behalf of the LINKs;
 - financial arrangements;
 - how breaches of authority are dealt with.
 11. Health and social care providers will be required to:
 - respond to LINKs requests for information;
 - consider and respond to reports and recommendations made by LINKs;
 - allow authorised representatives of LINKs to enter and view premises at which care is delivered (but representatives will not be permitted to enter and view private rooms of individuals).
 12. LINKs must produce an annual report giving details of their activities, their membership and their financial arrangements.

Relationship between LINKs and Overview and Scrutiny Committees

13. LINKs will be able to refer “health matters” to the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee. There is no obligation for the committee to act on every referral but they must acknowledge the receipt of the referral and “keep the referrer informed of the committee’s actions in relation to the matter.”

Finance

14. Dudley has been allocated £518,000 by the Department of Health over a three year period commencing 1 April 2008 to procure a Host organisation in order to establish a LINK in the borough.

Law

15. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (Section 223), which received royal assent October 2007, requires each social services authority to procure an organisation or “host” to establish and support a Local Involvement Network (LINKs) in each local authority area.
16. The relevant statutory provisions regarding the Council’s Constitution are contained in Part II of the Local Government Act 2000, together with Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Equality Impact

17. The aims and principles of LINKs can be seen as contributing to the equality agenda in its pursuit of improving care for all. This implies a challenge to ensure that services meet the needs of all sectors of the community. Shaw Trust will be asked to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment relating to implementation.

Recommendations

18. It is recommended that Cabinet supports the progress towards establishing a LINK in Dudley to be provided by Shaw Trust.



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List of Background Papers

A Stronger Local Voice: A Framework for Creating a Stronger Local Voice in the Development of Health and Social Care Services. Department of Health June 2006.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2007

Next steps in the development of Local Involvement Networks. Report of the Lead Officer to the HASC July 2007

Getting Ready for LINKs. Department of Health August 2007

'Have your say' a Consultation on the regulations for Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), Report of the Lead Officer to the HASC November 2007