

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

10th July 2007

Report of the Lead Officer

Next steps in the development of Local Involvement Networks

Purpose of Report

1. To keep the Health and Adult Social Care Committee (HASC) advised about the development of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) in Dudley.

Background

2. The HASC considered a Report on a publication of the Department of Health's (DH) consultation document *A Stronger Local Voice: A Framework for Creating a Stronger Local Voice in the Development of Health and Social Care Services* in September 2007. This Report outlined the way in which central Government wished to develop arrangements for ensuring that people are consulted and involved in every way in their local health and social care services.
3. In particular, through legislation currently before Parliament, the Government plan to abolish the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) and Patient Forums and replace them with new bodies called LINKs whose remit will also include social care. As such, the LINK will build on the achievements of current local involvement and participation approaches in health and social care in Dudley as well as taking them on to a new stage of development and integration.
4. Since the publication of the consultation document, the DH held a national event in December 2006 and further regional events in April 2007 where Dudley was represented.
5. These events have covered further details and questions which, subject to the successful passage through Parliament of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, it is expected will result in, amongst other things:
 - funding being allocated to Local Authorities to procure a host to develop a LINK for Dudley by April 2008
 - the LINK bringing together stakeholders in health and social care in Dudley
 - the LINK will be independent of the Local Authority
 - the LINK establishing sustainable governance and membership arrangements

- the LINK working with the HASC to ensure positive working between the LINK and the Committee
 - the LINK also working with the HASC to promote even stronger involvement of Dudley citizens in local health and social care services between the LINK and the Committee
 - the LINK developing a way of working that complements and strengthens and does not duplicate other ways in which the voice of Dudley people is heard e.g. through Dudley's elected representatives
 - the LINKs will not necessarily take exactly the same form across all areas. Dudley's approach will need to make sense in our local circumstances
 - the LINKs will be able to request information from health and social care providers and expect a response within given timescales
 - Overall, the purpose of the LINK will be to provide a flexible way for local people and communities to engage with Health and Social Care organisations and make sure that organisations that commission and provide Health and Social Care services are more accountable to the public and build positive relationships with them.
6. The success of the LINK in Dudley, therefore, will depend on the success of the initial procurement exercise that will provide the basis for further development. The LINK will be a new way of working that promotes even wider engagement of Dudley people in our health and care services. As such, it aims to strengthen the voice of local people vis-à-vis Dudley health and social care service providers and should complement the ways in which the voice of local people is articulated e.g. through Elected Member representatives and especially those members scrutinising Dudley's health and social care services.

Finance

5. There are no immediate financial consequences to this report. *A Stronger Local Voice* indicates that Local Authorities will be given resources to develop the LINKs as independent bodies in their localities.

Law

7. *The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2007* currently before Parliament will be the legal basis for the establishment of LINKs.

Equality Impact

7. The HASC is committed to ensuring that the voice of the Committee is supported by local arrangements for consultation and participation under the LINKs initiative and are consistent with equalities requirements in the context of Dudley and carry forward their commitment to meeting the needs of Dudley's diverse population.

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that:

- The HASC note the contents of this report and comment as appropriate.

Brendan Clifford

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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