

Health Scrutiny Committee

2 February 2009

Report of the Head of Strategic Partnerships, City of York Council

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) – Progress Update

Summary

1. Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee received a report and presentation in April 2008 about the progress in establishing a Local Involvement Network (LINK) for the City of York.
2. This report is for information only and updates the Health OSC (Overview and Scrutiny Committee) on current progress. It also outlines the steps and measures that need to be taken to ensure that LINKs establishes an effective working relationship with the Health Scrutiny Committee and other key strategic partnerships. This will be particularly important during the 2009/10 financial year as the LINK delivers its workplan.

Background

3. LINKs are the independent, formally constituted bodies that have replaced the Patient Forums, previously attached to all local NHS trusts.
4. LINKs differ from previous systems in that they are based on broad networks rather than on small specialist groups, involving representatives from organisations as well as individuals, and addressing issues across health and social care rather than focusing on individual organisations or services.
5. Government legislation requires local authorities to commission a Host organisation to enable, support and facilitate the LINK in its activities. As a result of a tender exercise, North Bank Forum for Voluntary Organisations was the successful Host organisation commissioned to provide the LINK and were awarded a three year contract which commenced on the 1 April 2008.
6. LINK was launched in September 2008. Since then an Interim Steering Group has been established and governance arrangements for the LINK identified and agreed. Protocols covering complaints, membership, standards of conduct and expenses have also been established.
7. Work is currently being undertaken on profiling of the local community, its health needs and current service provision. Existing community networks and engagement mechanisms have been identified and current consultation and commissioning activity is beginning to be mapped. Work has been undertaken to look at how the

LINK will complement existing networks and partnerships and identify hard to reach groups.

8. Members of the Interim Steering have remained interested and eager to be involved in the LINK. They have moved from almost an entirely health based focus to health and social care and are now starting to consider wider social aspects for LINK work.
9. The LINK has received publicity in the local media and a number of individuals have referred problems for inclusion in the workplan. There has also been items referred to the LINK by voluntary sector groups and as a result there is a substantial list of issues for the workplan. In order to maintain accountability and enable wider involvement, it is proposed to list these issues for discussion at the inaugural LINK AGM in March 2009, and allow delegates to vote on their preferences.
10. At the AGM, a formal LINK Steering Group will be established comprised of seven community representatives joined by seven nominees from the various community / voluntary Forums e.g. Mental Health, York Carers, Older Peoples Assembly etc on the Steering Group.
11. LINK sub groups will be developed during the course of 2009/10. They will be formulated around issues that are incorporated in the workplan. It is also proposed to develop a LINK Readers Panel who will look at publications produced by statutory and voluntary agencies to check that they are easy to understand. A LINK Expert Panel will also be developed to undertake the 'enter and view' facility.
12. The next step for nominated LINK Steering Group members will be to meet statutory stakeholders on a regular basis to share information, and develop ways to address national initiatives and improve the provision of services.
13. The local authority has so far carried out three quarterly monitoring visits with Host staff and LINK officers over the course of the 2008/09 financial year. Financial accountability has been monitored and achievement of various milestones and targets have been investigated. All have been satisfactory so far. It has been agreed with the host that going forward it will be essential to:
 - build an accurate picture of the health and social care needs of York.
 - ensure the LINK is representative of the population it serves.

Consultation

14. As it begins to develop its own workplan, consultation between the LINK, the Health OSC and other strategic partnerships in the City is key. Following a LINKs workshop held on 17th November 2008, representatives of the Health OSC, CYC, LINK and Healthy City Board met in January 2009 to discuss these matters further.
15. Overarching issues of co-ordination between all key partners were addressed at the meeting, including the role and remit of:
 - PCT Clinical Board
 - Hospital Foundation Trust
 - LINKs
 - Chapter 10
 - Healthy City Board

- Health OSC

16. It was agreed that a co-ordinating function was required across the City in order to determine which agency addresses a particular health issue or matter as it arises.
17. It was agreed that the guidelines for each constituent player were not completely clear at present, and that further joint work planning needs to occur.
18. It may yet be too premature to determine the exact roles of each body. However, in terms of emerging work plans there is certainly a need to be alert to new intelligence, share information and agree lead responsibilities.
19. Feasibility studies are presently conducted to gather information on newly registered scrutiny topics. This study is then presented to the Health Scrutiny Committee to enable them to make an informed decision on whether a scrutiny review should go ahead or not. In the immediate future it was suggested that LINK could act as a consultee, and feed information into those feasibility studies via the Scrutiny Officer. Negotiations regarding the possibility of implementing this are still ongoing.

Options / Analysis

20. This report is for information only.

Corporate Priorities

21. There are no implications in this area

Implications

22. **Financial** – There are no implications in this area.
23. **Equalities** – There are no implications in this area.
24. **Legal** – There are no implications in this area.
25. **Crime and Disorder, Human Resources, Information Technology** – There are no implications in this area.

Risk Management

26. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

27. Members are asked to note and comment on the content of this information report.

Reason: To continue to track the development of LINKs in York.

Author:	Chief Officer Responsible for the report:		
Nigel Burchell Head of Strategic Partnerships Ext 2055 Annie Thompson LINK Partnership Co-ordinator Tel 01904 621631	Roger Ranson Assistant Director, Economic Development & Partnerships Ext 1614		
	Report Approved	,	Date 21 January 2009
	Chief Officer's name Title		
	Report Approved	<i>tick</i>	Date <i>Insert Date</i>
Specialist Implications Officer(s) <i>List information for all - None</i>			
Wards Affected: <i>List wards or tick box to indicate all</i>			All ,
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Background Papers:

None