
Health Scrutiny Committee

3 June 2008

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Update on Establishing a LINK 2008/2009

Summary

1. This report is for information only, and is to update members on progress in establishing a Local Involvement Network (LINK) in York.

Background To LINKs

2. LINKs are the independent, formally constituted bodies that have replaced the Patient and Public Involvement Forums, previously attached to all local NHS trusts. LINKs are now being established within each local authority area in the country.
3. LINKs differ from previous systems as 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.
4. Government legislation requires local authorities to commission a Host organisation to enable, support and facilitate the LINK in its activities. In order to achieve this the City of York Council has received £108K per annum for three years and an additional sum of £10K towards set up costs.
5. As a result of a tender exercise, North Bank Forum (NBF) 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. NBF offered a good mix of experience and understanding of the issues and challenges of developing a LINK. They also demonstrated clear independence from any services or other areas that could be the subject of reviews by the LINK in the future. For further information about the Forum, please visit www.northbankforum.org.uk
6. The contract for the Host organisation commenced in April 2008. NBF have shared an implementation plan with the Council and will be actively engaging all partners in the coming months.

Background to Report

7. At the previous Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 31 March 2008, it was agreed that the North Bank Forum (the Host organisation who are responsible for the development of a Local Involvement Network in York) would provide a work plan for 2008/09.

8. Subsequently, In April 2008 a meeting was held at the North Bank Forum headquarters in Hull and an action plan, with timescales and milestones was produced – see Annex A attached.

Consultation

9. A meeting has been held with the local authority Neighbourhood Management team to investigate the ways in which the LINK will complement existing networks, partnerships and user involvement groups in the City, to try and avoid conflicts and risks of duplication.
10. Discussions have been held with contract management experts in Housing and Social Services to ascertain their views on LINKs and to examine appropriate ways in which to contract monitor the Host's performance during 2008/09.

Analysis

11. It is apparent from the timetable / milestones contained in Annex A that the priority in year one is to successfully establish the LINK body, and begin to identify a broad work programme for years two and three. By the end of the first year of operation the expectation is that the LINK will be firmly established and functioning, with clear aims and objectives in terms of what it wants to achieve. North Bank Forum have recently held interviews for a LINKs development worker, dedicated to York. The development worker is expected to take up their post in July. Arrangements are also underway to secure premises for the LINK near York.
12. The first meeting of the LINKs Steering Group has been arranged for June 2008. This will enable a number of issues to be driven forward, such as the mapping of existing health activity and partnerships, establishing the governance arrangements for LINKs, and developing communications and publicity strategies etc.
13. A handover / transitional meeting will take place in June (arranged by the PCT) with former Patient Public Forum and Chapter 10 members in order to clarify how the LINK will benefit from the experiences of previous health user-involvement groups and how they can share learning and best practice.
14. Monitoring information will be collected on a quarterly basis throughout the contract with the intention of monitoring through both an outcomes and outputs based approach, assessing the influence and impact of LINKs, the numbers of people engaged in the process, diversity of group members etc.
15. Key issues to be monitored will include:
 - Performance of the LINKs Development Worker.
 - Robustness of the LINK governance structure.
 - Consultation with minority stakeholders - those involved and not involved in the LINK
 - Analysis of communication data - advertising material, leaflets, web-based material

16. A close working relationship has been established with North Yorkshire County Council and the North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust to enable the LINK to forge sub-regional relationships and plan for joint work.
17. The feasibility of holding a facilitated workshop with Health Scrutiny Committee and the Host (NBF) has been investigated. Unfortunately the funding for the use of the CFPS facilitator has now expired, but Members of Health Scrutiny may choose to continue with a facilitated session.

Options

18. In regard to the suggestion of holding a facilitated workshop, Members may decide to investigate the costs involved, in order to decide whether to go ahead with this for the Committee and Host (NBF).

Corporate Priorities

19. Relevant to Corporate Priority 6 – Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.

Implications

20. There are no known Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, IT or other implications at this stage.

Risk Management

21. In compliance with the Councils risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendation contained within this report.

Recommendations

22. Members are asked to:
 - note the report
 - provide comments on the workplan attached at Annex A.
 - Agree whether they wish to investigate the costs involved with holding a facilitated workshop

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Report Approved



Date 19 May 2008

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes Annex A – Action Plan