
Health Scrutiny Committee

23 September 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 February 2009 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 is particularly important during the 2009/10 financial year as the LINK begins to deliver its workplan. A representative of the LINK will attend the Health OSC to give a verbal progress report.

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. An Interim Steering Group was 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 was undertaken on profiling of the local community, its health needs and current service provision. Existing community networks and engagement mechanisms were identified and current consultation and commissioning activity

mapped. Work was also undertaken to look at how the LINK will complement existing networks and partnerships and identify hard to reach groups.

8. The LINK received publicity in the local media and a number of individuals have referred problems for inclusion in the workplan. Items were also referred to the LINK by voluntary sector groups
9. The inaugural LINKs AGM was held in March 2009. A LINK Steering Group was established, which is currently comprised of six community representatives joined by five nominees from the various community / voluntary forums in the City. The Steering Group feeds back to a group of ward committee representatives and wider community representatives. There are 13 members on the wider committee so far.
10. LINK sub groups have also been established including 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 has also been developed to undertake the 'enter and view' facility and to contribute to the workplan.
11. The LINKs workplan covers 5 key areas including; dignity and respect in health and social care; the future of mental health services in York; planning and buying of care services; implementation of an End of Life Care strategy; provision of hospital facilities for people with long-term conditions such as neurological conditions.
12. In each of these cases Public Awareness and Consultation Events (PACE) have been held or are soon to be held. As a result of public feedback at these events, and the further investigations of the LINK into these issues, a series of final reports will imminently be arising - which will be presented to key commissioning bodies and other strategic partners.
13. The local authority has so far carried out five quarterly monitoring visits with Host staff and LINK officers over the course of the 2008/09 and 2009/10 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:
 - address the visibility of the LINK and continue to ensure the LINK is representative of the population it serves.
 - deliver against the Work Programme, in a way that is joined-up with other key strategic partners in York
 - ensure that the LINK makes a difference to the delivery of health and social care in York and that the 'voice' of the LINK is being heard

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
 - Health City Board
 - Health OSC
17. 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.
 18. The guidelines for each constituent player are still not completely clear at present, and further joint work planning needs to occur, particularly with the Chapter 10 Group (recently renamed SHINEY – Social & Healthcare Information Network & Engagement York Group), the Healthy City Board and key voluntary sector agencies in the City such as York CVS.
 19. However, in terms of emerging work plans there has been good evidence of establishing shared intelligence, information and agreed responsibilities between the LINK and the Health OSC.
 20. A meeting was held between the LINK and the Chair & Vice-Chair of the Health OSC on 17th August 2009, primarily concerning LINKs input in Health OSC feasibility studies.
 21. 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. Discussions were held around consulting 'LINK experts' and this was generally agreed to be a good idea. LINK experts are now acting as consultees, and feed information into those feasibility studies via the Scrutiny Officer.
 22. An update on the LINKs workplan was also provided – as mentioned in paragraph 12 final reports for some elements of the workplan will be available from various Public Awareness & Consultation Events (PACE). It was agreed that in the first instance the Committee should see these, especially as some of the recommendations may directly affect them. The first ones to be ready would be regarding Mental Health and Neurological Services and these were added to the work plan for 23rd September Health OSC meeting.

Options / Analysis

23. This report is for information only.

Corporate Priorities

24. There are no implications in this area

Implications

25. **Financial** – There are no implications in this area.

- 26. **Equalities** – There are no implications in this area.
- 27. **Legal** – There are no implications in this area.
- 28. **Crime and Disorder, Human Resources, Information Technology** – There are no implications in this area.

Risk Management

- 29. In compliance with the Council’s risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

- 30. Members are asked to note this information report and consider how the work of the LINK and OSC can be co-ordinated to ensure maximum effectiveness.
- 31. Reason: In order to remain up to date on the health and well-being of the citizens of York.

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None