

**Local HealthWatch York: Progress Update**

**Summary**

1. To update the Health OSC on the progression from LINKs (Local Involvement Networks) to Local HealthWatch by April 2013.

**Background**

2. Subject to parliamentary approval, Local HealthWatch will be the local consumer champion for patients, service users and the public. It will have an important role in championing the local consumer voice, not least through its seat on the Health and Wellbeing board.
3. On 4th January 2012 the Department of Health (DoH) announced that local authorities are now not required to provide Local HealthWatch functions until 1st April 2013, 6 months later than had originally been anticipated.
4. The new date for establishing Local HealthWatch in April 2013 will support the need to align this more closely to the establishment of other new local bodies such as Health and Well Being Boards. The extension will also support preparations for the implementation of HealthWatch England (which will still be established in October 2012) to provide the leadership and support to Local HealthWatch organisations.

**Existing York LINK Arrangements in 2012/13**

5. North Bank Forum for Voluntary Organisations, the current LINK Host, have accepted a 12-month contract variation agreement (to March 2013), with a specific focus on preparing for, and managing the transition from LINKs to Local HealthWatch.

6. Due to CYC budgetary pressures the Host contract for 2012-13 has been reduced by approximately 20% in line with cuts to voluntary sector budgets across CYC. However, it should be emphasised that the LINK Host (North Bank Forum) still have a dedicated staffing complement of three officers to support the LINK during the forthcoming financial year. Their level of budget provision for training and support to York LINK members remains at the same level as in previous years.
7. A recent meeting held between LINK Steering Group representatives, the Host organisation and CYC established a series of positive steps moving forwards. LINK representatives emphasised that the work and achievements of the LINK must not be lost in the transition to HealthWatch.
8. There was also a positive discussion at the meeting about the York LINK work programme for the 2012-13 financial year, which is set down in an annex to the contract variation between CYC and North Bank Forum.
9. York LINK will continue with its “business as usual” approach in relation to matters brought up by members of the public and capturing these within PACE reports. The LINK also agreed to take note of any new Scrutiny topics agreed by Health OSC to see if they could add value to them.

### **Commissioning Process – Proposed Timescales**

10. Although the new deadline gives an additional six months before the launch of Local HealthWatch it is recommended that the procurement process should begin in time to allow a managed handover. It is suggested that the tender process for HealthWatch is launched by August 2012 at the latest, and that a contract is ideally awarded by November 2012. The successor body will have time to work alongside the current LINK in order to manage the handover process, secure premises, recruit / train staff and undertake marketing and promotional activity.
11. At the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) meeting in December 2011 it was suggested that a draft HealthWatch Service specification was produced by February 2012. Given the extended timescales, a revised timetable is suggested as follows.

- June: Final Service Specification developed
- CYC Portfolio holder to agree final service specification.
- HWB Briefed re Final Service Specification Headlines
- July: Announcement of intent to tender – to stimulate the market and encourage collaborative approaches
- July: Supplier Day Event Held
- July - August: Tender launched
- Nov: Successful HealthWatch provider announced (The full contract will commence April 2013, but the provider will initiate some transitional work beforehand to ensure a smooth handover.)

### **Further Points to Note**

12. It was clear from the York HealthWatch consultation event in December 2011 that there was broad agreement around some aspects of the overall shape / scope of HealthWatch. Feedback from the consultation events has directly informed the content of the Service Specification.
13. It has been agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board that two lots are procured - Local HealthWatch and NHS Complaints Advocacy. This may result in two separate providers or may allow a single provider to compete for, and hold both contracts. Alternatively, the delivery of NHS Complaints Advocacy services could be more closely connected to the wider advocacy provision in the City through this approach.
14. In respect of Complaints Advocacy, detailed discussions were held with other Councils in Yorkshire and the Humber to consider a joint procurement exercise. Rather than this approach it has been agreed to ensure regional co-ordination by developing

similar specifications / timescales to ensure regional synergy (rather than a combined regional contract).

15. Further guidance is due to be issued imminently by the DoH around the structure / constitution of Local HealthWatches, and the types of delivery models that are permissible. In lieu of this guidance being issued CYC officers are working towards the production of a service specification / tender process which will allow a variety of delivery models to be brought forward.
16. The overarching outcomes and objectives within the service specification will closely align with those contained within York's forthcoming Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the wider community engagement processes of CYC.

### **Options**

17. This report is for information only, there are no specific options for members to decide upon.

### **Analysis**

18. Please see above.

### **Council Plan 2011/2015**

19. The establishment of Local HealthWatch in York will make a direct contribution to the following specific outcomes listed in the draft City of York Council Plan:
  - Improved volunteering infrastructure in place to support increasing numbers of residents to give up their time for the benefit of the community
  - Increased participation of the voluntary sector, mutuals and not-for-profit organisations in the delivery of service provision

### **Implications**

20. **Financial** - Local HealthWatch will be financed through three separate strands of funding as follows:
  - Existing government funding to Local Authorities to support the current LINKs function will be rolled forward into HealthWatch.

- Monies provided for the current 'signposting element' of PCT PALS teams will be transferred across to local authority budgets from April 2013.
  - Monies for NHS Complaints Advocacy will be transferred to local authorities in April 2013.
21. It should be noted that while an indicative sum of money will be provided to City of York Council under each of the above headings, none of these monies will be ringfenced i.e. they will be paid to City of York Council as part of various Adult Social Care formula grants. The definitive amount of monies transferring from NHS PALS and Complaints Advocacy budgets to local authorities has yet to be confirmed.
  22. City of York Council has the discretion allocate all these monies to Local HealthWatch, or allocate some of the funding to other health and social care priorities.
  23. **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no human resource implications
  24. **Equalities** - Establishing a successful Local HealthWatch in York will enable the targeting of support towards activities which contribute towards all the equality outcomes set out in the draft Council Plan. It will be a requirement of the successful organisation(s) delivering Local HealthWatch to demonstrate and evidence their commitment to equal opportunities in the work of their organisations, in line with the Equalities Act 2010.
  25. **Legal** - There are no legal implications
  26. **Crime and Disorder** - There are no crime and disorder implications
  27. **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no information technology implications
  28. **Property** - There are no property implications
  29. **Other** -There are no other implications

## Risk Management

30. There are risks of challenge to the validity of City of York Council's procurement and commissioning process if a HealthWatch contract is let without full and proper consultation with City wide partners. The thorough consultation processes that will be followed through the HealthWatch Pathfinder process will mitigate this risk.

## Recommendations

25. Members are asked to note the report and the latest progress towards establishing HealthWatch. A further update will be provided at the next Health OSC meeting.

Reason: To oversee the transition from LINKs to HealthWatch is identified as a priority in the Health Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan.

## Contact Details

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report:**

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 07.06.2012

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** n/a

**Wards Affected:**

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**