

## **LINKs – Update on commissioning a new Local Involvement Network**

### **Background**

In 2003, the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health was set up. Their role was to support different ways for people who use Health Services to have a say about how those services are run. They support Patient Forums and there is a forum in each NHS Trust. The “Our Health, Our Care, Our Say” White Paper in 2006 stated “people should have more choice and a louder voice about the services they get in both Health and Social Care” The “A Stronger Voice” Document then proposed new ways for people who use health and social care service to have a say in how they are planned and run and this proposed the LINKs.

LINKs will replace Patient Forums in 2008 and there will be a LINK in each local authority area.

The Local Government Public Involvement in Health Bill received Royal Assent on the 30 October 2007. The legislation will abolish Patients Forums and lead to the establishment of a LINK in each local Authority area from April 2008.

### **Commissioning a “Host Organisation”**

The legislation requires a local authority to commission a Host organisation to enable, support and facilitate the LINK in its activities. The DH expects that given the skill, knowledge and experience requirements of Host Organisations it is likely that they will be chiefly drawn from local non-profit organisations which are well versed in community development, networking and have links to a wide range of organisations and communities.

Whilst the Host will enable and support the LINK, it will be for the LINK to decide what work it does and how to spend its available funds.

The contract with the Host will initially be for a period of 3 years. The Government has announced that a total of £84million will be available over a 3 year period to support the establishment of LINKs and that funding for each area will depend on factors such as population and deprivation. Details of the grant awards are due shortly. The Council has also received a sum of £10K towards set up costs for a LINK.

It has been agreed to commission a service jointly with North Yorkshire County Council with interested parties asked to indicate if they want to;

- a) provide a LINK across North Yorkshire
- b) provide a LINK in York only
- c) provide a LINK in North Yorkshire only

It is very clear however that each authority will have a separate contract with an organisation to provide a LINK in its area.

### **Process**

Adverts requesting expressions of interest in providing a LINK were placed in w/c 15 October 2007. Interested parties then have to complete a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire which will be evaluated in December. The tender process will follow OJEU regulations and Members and a Voluntary Sector representative will be involved in the process.

## **Timetable**

15 October – Adverts placed in OJEU etc.

27 November – Deadline for Return of Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)

7 December – PPQ's evaluated

14 December – Invitation to Tender sent out

24 January – Deadline for return of Tenders

7/8 February – Presentations

3 March - Award