

Local HealthWatch Factsheet

December 2011



What is Local HealthWatch?

Local HealthWatch will be replacing LINKs (Local Involvement Network) from autumn 2012 (subject to the passing of the Health & Social Care Bill 2011). They will aim to be the **local consumer champion across health and social care**, promoting better health for all and social care for adults.

- LINKs are preparing how to change into HealthWatch.
- Some LINKs are a HealthWatch Pathfinder which is a LINK piloting an area of the proposed HW.
- There is *no one way* to change into HealthWatch. The Department of Health has left it open on how local HW could work on a local level.

Some HW Pathfinder / LINKs have established a Transitional Group to begin discussions with appropriate stakeholders. It has been confirmed recently, that Pathfinder HealthWatch will receive additional money to help prepare for this. A copy of the list of Pathfinder HealthWatch is available at http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_130528

Note: Southwark is not a Pathfinder HealthWatch.

What will Local HealthWatch do?

They will keep the same LINK functions which include:

- encouraging local involvement
- collecting views and experiences of health and social care services
- monitoring services
- making their views known through reports and recommendations to those responsible for commissioning, managing, providing or scrutinising those services,

and LINK powers:

- Receive responses to LINK questions and recommendations from those responsible within 20 working days.
- carry out Enter and View visits to publicly funded services
- Refer issues to the Council's overview and scrutiny committee, and
- receiving a response within 20 working days.

But will also include four new activities:

- providing advice and information about access to local care services and choices known as "signposting" (*PCT PALS* Team currently do this for health services only. This work which is part of their job role will move into Local HealthWatch*)
- collecting views and making these views known to **HealthWatch England**
- making recommendations to HW England to advise on special reviews or investigations
- assisting HealthWatch England as required

**Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)*

New HealthWatch Structure

- Local HealthWatch will be a "body corporate", operating as an **independent organisation** and not as a LINK (a 'network' overseen by volunteers).
- This means it will have a **legal authority** to carry out its functions and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, Equality Act 2010 and the Data Protection Act.
- However it will be able to appoint its own staff and will have to produce annual accounts

To consider:

- There is currently no one way for local HealthWatch to organise themselves as a separate organisation.
- Uncertainty still exists about whether to continue the concept of 'LINK members', given that local HealthWatch will be open everyone.

Local HealthWatch and the Health & Wellbeing Board

- Local HealthWatch will have a representative seat on the **Health & Well Being Board (HWB)**.
- The Board will be made up of Council Directors of Children Services, Adult Social Care Services, Public Health, GP-Commissioners, local Councillor, voluntary & community representative and LINK/local HealthWatch
- They will be responsible for developing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and a joint Health and Well-being strategy for Southwark. This means that it will determine local health priorities and develop a plan to deliver improvements in these priorities.
- In Southwark, there is a Health & Well-being Planning Group who has met twice.

Note: We do not have a LINK representative on the Planning Group. Once the new Leadership Group has been established, the Group will select a representative to join the Planning Group.

Creating Local HealthWatch

- Local Authorities (Councils) will be responsible for making sure that a local HealthWatch is set up and carries out the specified duties.
- This will be done through a **contract** with the local HealthWatch organisation, or as it is now, to have an arrangement to contract with a Host organisation. It is up to the Local Authorities to create a specification and to performance manage the contract.
- Local Authorities will **fund** local Health Watch via a grant from Department of Health. Funding will be higher than currently for LINKs as it will be taking on more roles such as the advice and information services from PALs, but the amount has not been agreed.

To consider:

- There is uncertainty about how local authorities can contract with an 'organisation' that is still yet to be formed.
- Discussion is taking place around the country about LINK possibly setting up/changing into a charity, social enterprise or something similar. Groups of volunteers/organisations can potentially organise themselves into groups, as a potential 'bidder' for the contract.
- Local Authorities may also contract out parts of HealthWatch work. For example NHS Complaints Advocacy may be contracted out to an existing organisation that already provides advocacy services in the area.
- The status of LINK Host staff, when the LINK contract with the Host expires, remains uncertain as HealthWatch arrangements are not in place.

What is HealthWatch England?

- HealthWatch England will represent all local HealthWatch organisations at a national level.
- It will be a separate committee but will be under the umbrella of Care Quality Commission (CQC – the regulator for health and social care providers).
- The vision and governance arrangement of HealthWatch England is being developed at the moment. It is intended they will compile standards and guidance for local HealthWatch.
- Local HealthWatch will also pass on locally raised issues and concerns to HealthWatch England, who will work with the CQC to look into these.

Future Timeline

(Subject to the passing of Health and Social Care Bill)

April 2013

New Start Date for Local HealthWatch

April 2013

organisations to begin
NHS Complaints Advocacy Service to be passed to Local Authorities

For more information, please visit
HealthWatch Community
<http://healthwatch.fizz.uk.net>