

AGENDA ITEM:

COMMITTEE: HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 20th NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ADULTS & COMMUNITIES)

REPORT TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORKS
IN STOCKPORT (LINKS)

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on the procurement of a host organisation to support Stockport's future Local Involvement Network (LINK).
- 1.2 The Committee is invited to note the report, offer comments on the suggested process, and nominate one Scrutiny Committee member to participate as a member of the Getting Ready for LINKs Working Group.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Part 13 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (which received Royal Assent on 30th October 2007), requires every local authority with social services responsibilities to replace Patients' Forums with a LINK for their area by 1 April 2008. Members will be aware of the work of Patients' Forums who have worked closely with the Health Scrutiny Committee. Currently Stockport's PCT and FT Patients' Forums both act as expert advisors to the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2 Backed up by certain powers, LINKs will provide everyone in the community from individuals to voluntary groups with the chance to say what they think about local health and social care services and influence how these are planned and run. Powers will include:
 - To enter premises and view the services provided (with some restrictions, e.g. for domiciliary care LINKs will not be able to enter people's homes).
 - To request information from commissioners and providers and receive a response.
 - To make reports and recommendations and receive a response.
 - To refer matters to the relevant scrutiny committee and receive a response.
- 2.3 LINKs are different to Patients' Forums because:
 - They will look into both health *and social care services* (currently Patients' Forums focus solely upon NHS services). Each LINK will be coterminous with the boundaries of local authorities with social services responsibilities.

- They will not only comprise volunteering members of the public, but will also be ‘networks of networks’, bringing together groups and charities as well as interested individuals.
 - Local authorities will commission a host organisation who will provide support for the LINK.
- 2.4 The Department of Health (DoH) will make targeted grants to local authorities to fund commissioning host organisations, depending on size, population and other factors such as deprivation. At the time of producing this report the Council is still awaiting notification of its funding allocation. However, a recent update from DoH stated that “each authority will receive a base-line amount of £60,000, plus an additional amount based on the Relative Needs Formula (RNF)” to fund the local LINK.
- 2.5 The Government has not prescribed how a LINK should be structured and therefore there is a degree of flexibility in how local authorities respond to the guidance. The LINK, the Council and the host organisation will set up appropriate governance arrangements.

3.0 PROGRESS IN STOCKPORT

- 3.1 In Stockport a Getting Ready for LINKs Working Group has been constituted to oversee the development of a service specification for and procurement of the host. This comprises officers across Stockport Council, representatives of Stockport PCT and NHS Foundation Trust, and representatives of Stockport’s Patient’s Forums. It is proposed that a member of the Health Scrutiny Committee (which will need to determine a specific relationship with the LINK) be invited to participate in the Group.
- 3.2 At the initial meeting of the Working Group it was agreed that the host should carry out as much ‘design activity’ as possible. It is suggested that the host be procured with this in mind in order to lead the full engagement of patients, the public and the voluntary and community sector after April 1st 2007.
- 3.3 The Working Group is therefore left with the following tasks:
- Developing a service specification. The development of the service specification should be relatively straightforward as this will largely draw upon guidance published by DoH¹.
 - Developing an outcomes framework for the performance monitoring of the host.
 - Taking an inclusive approach to the procurement of the host, involving the voluntary and community sector and patients and carers in the process, and identifying appropriate membership of the future LINKs

¹ *Contracting a Host Organisation for your Local Involvement Network*, Department of Health, http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_077266

leadership group. Although the LINK would ultimately agree its own model of operating the Working Group's preference is for a LINK with a standing leadership group that can take decisions and have responsibility for the work programme. In the short term the Getting Ready for Working Group would act as the steering group until this role can be handed over to the LINK membership.

3.4 At its 12th November 2007 meeting the Executive received a report on the development of LINKs and was recommended to:

- i) **Approve the invitation of tenders for a host organisation to support the Local Involvement Network (LiNK) on a three-year contract beginning in 1st April 2008.**
- ii) **Recognise the preparatory work in-hand and authorise the Corporate Director (Adults & Communities) to make amendments to the contract specification provided as guidance by the Department of Health (DoH) as may prove necessary prior to the formal invitation of tenders.**

3.5 The Scrutiny Committee will receive a verbal update on the outcome of the Executive meeting.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

4.1 A Prior Indication Notice has already been placed in the Official Journal of the European Union. Following Executive approval an advertisement inviting expressions of interest will be published. A Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) will be provided to interested applicants which will enable the Council to shortlist applicants for interview, who will then be provided with the full contract specification.

Consult scrutiny	20 th November 07.
OJEU advertisement	21 st December 07 at the latest.
Provision of full contract specification to approved applicants	14 th February 08 at the latest.
Award of contract	21 st March 08 at the latest.
Contract begins	1 st April 08.

4.2 The Working Group has consulted the PPI Group, under the Stronger Communities Partnership, on how best to involve the voluntary and community sector at this stage. As a result, in addition to the co-opted members of the Group itself our approach will be to communicate on an ongoing basis with the Stronger Communities Partnership, the Meeting of Voluntary Executives (MOVES) and the PPI Group. The Working Group will also produce an article for the Bridge Newsletter and ensure that this is circulated to the entire membership of the Stronger Communities Partnership.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the report and nominate one Scrutiny Committee member to participate in the process as a member of the Getting Ready for LINKs Working Group.**
- 5.2 The next Getting Ready for LINKs Working Group meeting will be held on the 4th December, 11am. Meetings are currently scheduled on a monthly basis, and although it is unlikely that meetings will be held on a more regular basis, some members of the Working Group may also be involved more fully in the procurement process itself (e.g. review of submitted PQQs, interview, etc). At its next meeting the Working Group will need to identify how the procurement process proceeds including who should be appropriately involved.