



*Your LINK for improving health
and social care
Your future Local HealthWatch*



a LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK

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LINK into Local HealthWatch Newsletter

National update

Latest news on the Health and Social Care Bill 2010-11

The Bill, that introduces a Local HealthWatch into Local Authority areas, had its third reading on 7 September 2011 and will now be considered by the House of Lords. The first reading took place on 8 September 2011 which is a formality that signals the start of the Bill's journey through the Lords. The second reading - the general debate on all aspects of the Bill - is scheduled for Tuesday, 11 October 2011.

The Bill

The Bill proposes to create an independent NHS Board, promote patient choice and to reduce NHS administration costs. As well as establishing Local HealthWatch and the national body, HealthWatch England, it:

- establishes an independent NHS Board to allocate resources and provide commissioning guidance
- increases GPs' powers to commission services on behalf of their patients
- strengthens the role of the Care Quality Commission
- develops Monitor, the body that currently regulates NHS Foundation Trusts, into an economic regulator to oversee aspects of access and competition in the NHS
- cuts the number of health bodies to help meet the Government's commitment to cut NHS administration costs by a third, including abolishing Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities.

The revised Health and Social Care Bill states that membership of the governing body of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) that decides what local services should be provided must include at least two lay members, one of whom has to be the chair or deputy chair. The Bill states the accompanying regulations can set a maximum number of lay members.

Involving People

The Bill says that CCGs will have to involve the public in all decisions and its planning. It has been strengthened by stating that CCGs will have duties to promote patient involvement in all

their functions - consulting patient representatives, patients and carers - stronger than the previous obligation which was to 'have regard to the need to' promote patient involvement.

This month's HealthWatch Newsletter focuses on the '**influencing**' role of HealthWatch, a role that will be done through a network of people and organisations, gathering views and using these to inform those who will be making decisions (about health and social care), such as the emerging Health and Wellbeing Board. The information it gathers will also help to monitor the services provided.

Local update - Building the Network for the Future

Influencing

To be able to influence decisions about health services and social care in the area Local HealthWatch will need to be able to gather and share a wide range of experiences and views. To do this, Local HealthWatch will need to have an extensive network of people and organisations that reaches into as many areas of Kent as possible. It will need to use the information that its network has gathered (from patient / user experiences and views) to advise Boards that make the decisions about what services are needed and where they will be provided. The network will also help the HealthWatch body to be as representative as possible.

Currently, the Kent LINK is busy building this network through a number of projects that were agreed at its 2011 Annual Meeting. The examples that follow will build on what is already there and create a much larger network and therefore a stronger voice for local people.

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

Across the county, the Kent LINK, together with NHS Kent and Medway, is helping GP practices set up Patient Participation Groups (PPGs). This will help local patients / users of the services to know about their local services and help them influence the decisions made about the services. The PPGs and their networking will help local people ensure their views and experiences of local services are heard by either the CCG or the Health and Wellbeing Boards.

For more information on PPGs, or if you want to get more involved in this area of the LINK's local work, please contact Clive Brock - West Kent, Sally Denley - East Kent or Rich Beckwith.

LINK Locality Groups

To help local people, communities, groups and organisations to collectively have a voice, the LINK has started to create, as a trial, two Locality Groups – one for the Isle of Sheppey and one in the west of the county (exact area is to be decided). The Locality Groups will be made up of LINK participants in the area and will also include District Councillors, professionals involved in the services, as well as the local PPGs. The Groups will help to monitor local services, raise issues and concerns for reporting to local managers and help with consultations.

For more information, or if you want to get more involved in a LINK Locality Group, please contact Cate Boland – Isle of Sheppey Group or Clive Brock for the West Kent Group.

Building the Network

Local HealthWatch needs to be representative and able to deliver the views and experiences of **all** communities. In addition to the key projects listed above, there are others that are contributing to strengthening the network, gathering more information and providing more opportunities for people to focus on their areas of interest and become more involved, thereby strengthening the LINK's ability to influence decisions being made:

- ***The Equality and Diversity Project***
- ***Youth Project***
- ***Mental Health Network***
- ***NHS Quality Accounts Annual Reports to the Public***
- ***Hygiene, Disinfection and Patient Experience in Hospitals***
- ***Supervision and Training of Care Assistants***
- ***Cervical Screening Uptake in West Kent***
- ***Patient Experience in Outpatient Clinics across Kent***
- ***Monitoring Quality of Residential Homes in East Kent.***

Additional roles for Local HealthWatch that will help it to 'influence'

Local HealthWatch will have two additional roles; providing information and complaints advocacy. Both will help the new HealthWatch to have a more complete and overall picture that will greatly enhance the LINK's current functions and processes, such as that undertaken by the LINK's Priorities Panel – reviewing and assessing issues brought to it and addressing them in accordance with a set of criteria. All three together will provide evidence and intelligence that will help to **influence** local decision makers.

Kent Local HealthWatch Development Group

As reported in Issue 1, the Group have agreed to work with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) in their 'Readiness Programme'. During the last four weeks, many workshops and interviews have taken place. Evidence and views gathered will help in the production of a report on the state of the readiness of Kent in preparation for Local HealthWatch. In turn, this will give the focus of direction for the work needed for the transition into Local HealthWatch. The full report is due at the end of September and will be available on the Kent LINK website.

Kent LINK Transition Group

The first meeting of LINK participants interested in the process of transition from LINK to HealthWatch took place on 15 August 2011. The Group was given the background information to the Bill and then took part in the first workshop for the Readiness Programme. The Group raised areas of interest that could help deliver Local HealthWatch in a 'local way'; this included the work of PPGs and the set up of Locality Groups. A further meeting of this Group is in preparation.

If you have any questions, queries or concerns about any of the information contained in this Newsletter, please contact:

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