



**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny  
**Date:** Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007  
**Subject:** Local Involvement Network (LINK)  
**Report of:** Assistant Chief Executive  
**Contact officer:** Adrian Hardy – 01942 827130

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**Purpose / summary:** To provide additional information to Members of the Committee in relation to the establishment of a Local Involvement Network (LINK) in Wigan

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** Not to bring this extra detail to Committee. The material has been brought to Committee to ensure Members are fully aware of the current situation

**Key Decision:** This report does not involve a key decision.

**Recommendation / decision:** The views of Members are requested

**Risks / Implications:** This is an open report

**Financial:** Some funding will be made available to the council to cover the costs of managing this contract. The Department of Health will pay the costs of the LINK organisation, via payments to this council.

**Staffing:** Some time in managing the contract – will not equate to a significant proportion of staff time.

**Policy:** Equality and Diversity  
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? DIA has not been conducted at this time. The views of participating organisations, which will cover the full range equality and diversity issues, are currently being sought.

**Wards affected:** Borough wide

**Property – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council's asset base or its occupation?**

No

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?** Potentially – the LINK will be managed by the Council and is intended to give the local population involvement in both health and social care issues in the Borough. The previous PPIF related only to health & had no right to pass comment

On the Council's social care activity.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

No

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Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **Yes \***

Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **Yes \***

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

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**For Cabinet reports only :**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>x</b>
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

Discussion	<b>x</b>
Decision	
Information	

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**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny</b>	Cabinet	Council
	8 <sup>th</sup> October 2007		

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Adrian Hardy

Date 4<sup>th</sup> October 2007

**Background:**

The attached document sets out the background to the establishment of Local Involvement Networks. This proposal has been presented to Health Scrutiny Committee, but subsequently additional information has emerged. In view of the wide ranging implications the LINk will have for all Members; I have agreed with the Chair that this report would also come on the main Committee agenda.

# **Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) explained October 2007**

## **Background**

### **Patient and public involvement**

For health and social care to fulfil its potential, members of the public should take a substantial role in shaping the care system's development, and patients and service users should be kept well informed of clinical processes and decisions. This document provides an introduction to Local Involvement Network (LINK) organisations, their role and where the concept has come from.

In 2003, the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health was set up. Their job has been to support different ways for people who use health services to have a say about how those services are run. They support Patient Forums. There is a Patient Forum in each NHS Trust.

### **Patient & Public Involvement Forums (PPIF)**

There are currently 4 PPIFs that look towards the borough of Wigan

1. Ashton Leigh and Wigan PPI Forum, Facilitated from the New Horizons Centre, Bolton
2. Wrightington Wigan and Leigh PPI Forum, Facilitated by the New Horizons Centre, Bolton
3. North West Regional Ambulance PPI Forum – facilitated via the Black Health Agency Manchester
4. PPI Forum 5 Borough Partnership – facilitated via Halton Voluntary Action / Warrington CVS, The Gateway 85 -101 Sankey Street Warrington WA1 1LZ

The forums review the activity of each trust and have visiting and inspecting rights into the services delivered by them.

### **“Our Health, Our Care, Our Say” Health and Social Care White Paper 2006**

This paper stated that people should have, ‘more choice and a louder voice’ about the services they get. The paper highlighted that this is relevant in not only health services but social care too.

### **A Stronger Local Voice July 2006**

“A Stronger local voice” set out the Government's plans for the future of patient and public involvement in health and social care. These plans include the establishment of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) which will replace patient forums.

## **Key facts about LINKs**

- LINKs will replace Patient and Public Involvement Forums.
- The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health will close.
- There will be a LINK in every Local Authority area (that is responsible for Social Services).
- LINKs will be a network of people and organisations or groups. They will not take over from groups that work at the moment. They should be able to make it easier for groups to have their say about local services, and should give people the chance to say what they think about their local services, what they feel is working well and what is not so good. They should also give people the chance to check how care services are planned and run.
- They will be able to represent the views and ideas of lots of different people and will act as a mechanism to feedback what people have said about services so that things can change for the better

## **Who can be part of a LINK?**

LINKs must be diverse organisations. They must be able to represent all of the different groups and types of people that make up the local population. They will require strong leaders and clear structures so that everyone knows who is responsible for what. Local people will need to be able to see that what they say is being listened to. They should be user led organisations, can include anyone and you do not have to be a member to get involved.

## **What Powers will LINKs have?**

LINKs will have special powers so that they can say how local services should improve. They will be able to:

- Make reports and recommendations and get a reply within a set amount of time.
- Go into some types of services to see what they do.
- Tell an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) what they have found and get a response.
- Ask for information and get a reply within a set amount of time.

To ensure that our LINK has most relevance to the needs of service users it will be essential to establish it with a clear function in mind, with direct lines of communication to all provider organisations and sufficient recognition among commissioning organisations so that its recommendations are acted upon.

## **How will LINKs be set up?**

Each local authority will get a grant from the Department of Health. They will then use the money to pay a host organisation. The host will be responsible for setting up the LINK and giving practical support to keep it going. The LINK will be independent from the local authority. The Council will be responsible for appointing, managing and monitoring the performance of the host organisation.

A consultation exercise was launched by the DoH at the end of September along with some clarificatory guidance on the role of LINKs. I will also be attending a meeting in Leeds on 8<sup>th</sup> October in relation to LINKs and will be able update the Committee on the views of the DoH at the meeting.

## **The role of local authorities in LINKs**

Local authorities have a number of roles in relation to the establishment, implementation and ongoing development of LINKs and will need to develop a working relationship with the LINK. In particular, local authorities should consider the following points.

- Prior to their establishment, local authority officers and councillors should undertake work to stimulate interest in LINK, with both potential members and participants and with potential host organisations. This may be undertaken through workshops, meetings, information on council websites or in council newsletters, and through discussion with interested groups and organisations. Local authorities may find it helpful to make use of processes developed through the compact to achieve this.
- Local authorities are responsible for contracting with a host organisation, initially for three years, for effective support for the LINK within the budget allocated. This will involve developing a contract specification, making use of the document *Getting ready for LINKs – Contracting a host organisation for your Local Involvement Network*, tendering and letting the contract, and performance managing the contract against the specification.
- The overview and scrutiny committee (OSC) within the local authority has a role in scrutinising how the contracting process was undertaken, and ensuring that best value is achieved.
- The OSC may commission a LINK to undertake work on its behalf, for example to consult people on their views on an issue that it plans to scrutinise and review in the future.
- Local authority departments and a LINK may agree to pool information or work together to gather their views and experiences of local people and groups regarding particular health and social care service.

## **Accountability**

No national system of accountability has been put in place, as this should be determined locally. LINKs are responsible for deciding their priorities and actions, and they should be able to account for those actions, decisions and achievements to local people and organisations.

Accountability needs to be demonstrated;

- By the host to the local authority
- By the host to the LINK
- By the LINK to local people and organisations
- By LINKs to the Secretary of State for Health

Each LINK therefore needs to be clear about what it is accountable for and how it will account for its actions. The governance arrangements will therefore be critical to this process.

## **Next steps in Wigan**

As the accountable organisation for ensuring a LINK is established by March 2008, and in line with experience gained in the pilot areas, the council are proposing to undertake the following steps:

- Establish a “Getting Ready for LINKs Working Group”
  - At a minimum, membership will probably include:
    - People who use health and social care services
    - Voluntary and community sector organisations and networks
    - Members of existing Patient and Public Involvement Forums
    - Local Authority leads for procurement, commissioning, scrutiny and community engagement
    - NHS PCT leads for commissioning and patient and public involvement
    - Social care leads for user involvement and commissioning
    - Health and social care regulatory bodies.
  
- Role for the Working Group
  - Key activities could include:
    - Developing a stakeholder/community map of the area identifying existing groups/networks and the connections/relationships between them
    - Developing a community profile identifying population groupings, local health and social care issues, priorities and preferences
    - Developing and implementing a communication plan to raise awareness of the LINK’s role and how to get involved
    - Developing an engagement plan building on existing relationships and networks to ensure that a range of approaches are used to enable local people and groups to effectively and appropriately engage with the LINK
  
- Raise awareness among the wider community – an event has already been organised for 11 October by the PPI Forum Support Organisation. As a Council we are inviting group representatives to updating meetings on 18<sup>th</sup> October, either morning or evening; a training day on November 16<sup>th</sup> and a feedback session on either 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> December.
  
- Initial work to identify prospective host organisation.
  - We will begin the process of procuring a host, which will involve promoting our LINK to potential host organisations (particularly voluntary organisations and social enterprises who may be interested in tendering), working with local stakeholders to inform the tender materials (such as a contract specification). We will also be advertising for expressions of interest and requesting a Prequalification Questionnaire so that the final procurement process can be streamlined.

**Adrian Hardy**  
**Wigan Council**