2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006

The Future of Public and Patient Involvement Forums – Local Involvement Networks (LINks)



# **Report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny**

# Purpose of Report

- 1. To up-date members on the Governments plans to change the system for involving patients and the public in influencing local health services.
- 2. CharlesTremeer (Durham Rural Community Council) and Ross Cowan (Regional Commission for Public and Patient Involvement -CPPIH) will be in attendance to update members on this emerging agenda. Gerald Tompkins, the County Councils Head of Strategic Planning and Health Improvement, will also be in attendance.

# Background/Information

- 3. The recently published Department of Health document (for information and comment), 'A stronger local voice: a framework for creating a stronger local voice in the development of health and social care services" (July 2006) reported that Public and Patient Involvement Forums (PPIF) are to be replaced by Local Involvement Networks (LINks).
- 4. The key elements of the new arrangements are:-
  - The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) will be abolished.
  - Patient forums will be replaced by Local Involvement Networks.
  - Local involvement networks (LINks) will be established for every local authority area with social services responsibilities.
  - LINks will provide flexible ways for individuals, organisations and communities to engage with health and social care organisations in ways that best suit the communities and the people in them. They will build on the best work of patient forums creating a strengthened system of user involvement and will promote public accountability in health and social care through open and transparent communication with commissioners and providers.

- LINks should operate in an inclusive way with a membership that includes user groups, local voluntary and community sector organisations and interested individuals.
- LINks will establish a specific relationship with overview and scrutiny committees (OSC) and have the power to refer matters to the OSC.
- OSCs will be well placed to focus their attention on the work of commissioners of health and social care services and will be able to question commissioners about the decisions they have made.
- The duties on health care organisations to involve and consult will be simplified and strengthened. There will be a new duty placed on health care commissioners to respond to what patients and the public have said.
- Work is being undertaken to explore ways of creating a stronger voice for patients, service uses and members of the public at a national level.
- With more user involvement in the regulation of health and social care providers.
- 5. Initial discussions, at officer level, on how best to progress this agenda in a partnership context have begun.
- 6. These will be reported back to Health Scrutiny with opportunities to engage members in determining the direction of travel with LINks.

### Recommendation

7. The Health Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report at this stage, looking forward to contributing to the development of Local Involvement Networks (LINks) in County Durham.

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### Background paper:

"A stronger local voice: a framework for creating a stronger local voice in the development of health and social care services" (Copy in Members Resource Centre)