



North Tyneside LINK E-Bulletin August 2010

LINK Consultation Event: Establishing HealthWatch

LINK is holding a consultation event about the future of LINKs and the establishment of HealthWatch on **Thursday 9 September** at the Oxford Centre, Longbenton between 10am and 1.30pm, with lunch included.

Background

In its Health White Paper published on July 12, the Government announced plans to set up an independent champion for health and social care consumers called HealthWatch England. Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will become local **HealthWatch** organisations. The Government plans to build on the current role of LINKs by turning them in to a 'citizens advice bureau' for health and social care.

The Department of Health are now consulting on how HealthWatch should work to achieve its aims, and how the transition from LINK will happen. The aim of our event is to submit a collective response from North Tyneside LINK. You can [download the consultation document here](#), or request a hard copy from the team.

For more information or to book your place telephone 0191 200 1429 or email link@voda.org.uk.

Common Questions and Answers

These are some of the common questions and answers that have been raised in the consultation document – you can find these, and others, on pages 26-28 of the consultation document.

Are the Government abolishing LINKs?

No. The Government recognises the achievements of LINKs and wants to build upon their work. To give patients a stronger voice, the Government is planning to establish a new national consumer champion called HealthWatch **England**. To ensure that there is a champion for patients' concerns in every area, the Government are also planning to transform Local Involvement Networks into local HealthWatch organisations.

So, how will HealthWatch differ to LINKs?

The White Paper proposes giving local HealthWatch additional functions and funding, for providing complaints advocacy services and for supporting individuals to exercise choice. Local HealthWatch will be able to report concerns about the quality of local health and social care services to HealthWatch England. Local HealthWatch will be able to do this

independently of their local authority and HealthWatch England will be able recommend that the Care Quality Commission takes action.

A HealthWatch member will also sit on the new Health and Wellbeing boards so the community has a say in local decisions.

When will HealthWatch start work?

The legislation to create HealthWatch and its functions will be laid before Government later this year. It is expected that HealthWatch England will be set up in shadow form in autumn 2011 to support LINKs to become local HealthWatch organisations. We expect HealthWatch England and local HealthWatch to be up and running from April 2012.

Key Issues to Consider

These are the issues that we will be exploring at LINK's event – you can read more about these on pages 16-23 of the consultation document.

- **Expanding the role of LINKs as local HealthWatch:** How should this happen?
- **Stronger voice:** How can the needs and wishes of service users be at the heart of every decision that health and social care professionals make?
- **Governance**
- **Independence and accountability**
- **National/Local Balance**
- **Relationships with a range of organisations and bodies**
- **Transition from LINK to HealthWatch**

If you are unable to attend this event but wish to contribute to the consultation, please contact the LINK team on 0191 200 1429 or email link@voda.org.uk.

This is part of a wider consultation on the White Paper, more details of which can be [found here](#), and in the August edition of Stronger Voice.

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For more information about North Tyneside LINK visit our [website](#) or telephone 0191 200 1429.

To request this E-Newsletter in alternative formats or languages, please contact LINK on 0191 200 1429 or email meg.woollam@voda.org.uk