
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HEALTHWATCH BLACKPOOL - UPDATE

1.0 Matter for consideration

- 1.1 The Committee to consider an update on the implementation of Healthwatch Blackpool.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the report and identify any further issues for scrutiny.
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3.0 Summary of key issues

- 3.1 The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires all local authorities to commission a local Healthwatch. Healthwatch will be the new local health and social care consumer champion and will represent the views of local residents of all ages, advocating and influencing the delivery and commissioning of health and social care services on their behalf.
- 3.2 Healthwatch will replace the LINK (Local Involvement Network), which is the current organisation established to lead resident engagement and influence in health and social care. In addition to the statutory functions carried out by LINK, local Healthwatch will also be required to provide 'signposting' NHS information and advice. This is currently referred to as PCT PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Services).
- 3.3 Local Healthwatch organisations will be accountable to local authorities for operating effectively and providing value for money. Local authorities will have the responsibility for putting in place different arrangements if a local Healthwatch organisation is not operating effectively. Healthwatch Blackpool will be performance managed through the council's commissioning and contract monitoring regime
- 3.4 Healthwatch Blackpool will be developed in the form of a body corporate able to carry out statutory functions, represent the views of both adults and children and nominate a member to sit on the Health and Wellbeing Board, so that local people's views are integral to local decision making about services.
- 3.5 Following an options appraisal a decision was taken to develop Healthwatch Blackpool as a Social Enterprise in the legal form of a company limited by guarantee.
- 3.6 The approach taken locally to establish a local Healthwatch organisation will determine the most appropriate funding vehicle to use. An approach that adopts community ownership and governance in the structure of the new body will require active participation of local people and community groups. This may best be achieved by using a 'grant-in-aid' funding route that empowers the local community to develop the capacity and capability to own the organisation [Grant-in-aid is a payment to finance the costs of a body operating at arm's length].
- 3.7 The Council is a pathfinder authority and as such is expected to be developing the new system ahead of its statutory implementation date. The decision to create a

shadow Healthwatch Executive Board will enable the setting up of Healthwatch Blackpool and the transfer of LINK activity with the benefit of the Healthwatch Executive Board working independently of the Council.

- 3.8 Recruitment to the shadow Healthwatch Executive Board has begun in order for the Executive Board to be in place by November 2012 and to begin the work to set up Blackpool Healthwatch and to transfer LINK activity.
- 3.9 The Council is required to fund LINK and Healthwatch activity during 2012-13. Current funding for Blackpool LINK for 2012-13 is £127,100. In addition, an allocation of £5,000 for Healthwatch start-up has been made available and will support activity as proposed in this year. The Government has not yet confirmed the final allocation for Healthwatch Blackpool for 2013-14 although this is expected to be announced in December 2012.
- 3.10 The Council is required to allocate funding at 'an appropriate level' to enable the effective transition from LINK to Healthwatch and for Healthwatch to carry out its statutory functions from 1 April 2013. There is the possibility of intervention by the Secretary of State should the Council not fulfil its obligations.
- 3.11 Local authorities are expected to maintain current funding and support for LINKs until Local Healthwatch organisations are established.

4.0 Witnesses / representatives

- 4.1 As requested by the Committee members, the following persons have been invited to attend the meeting to speak on the matter:
- Nicola Stubbins, Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Systems Development

Relevant officer:

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Appendices attached:

None.

Background papers:

None.