

Shadow Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board 30th January 2011

Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Update on HealthWatch Developments

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Shadow Health and Well Being Board on HealthWatch developments.

National developments

2. The new start date for establishing local HealthWatch has been announced as April 2013. In the mean-time, local authorities under the auspices of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, will need to continue to provide a Local Involvement Network (LINK).
3. The timescale for HealthWatch England remains as October 2012.
4. We are working to the assumption that the sections of the Health and Social Care Bill 2011 relating to HealthWatch will pass into law without significant amendment. This will not be confirmed until Royal Assent, expected in May 2012.
5. Government funding of £3.2m will be made available in 2012/13 for start up costs in setting up Local HealthWatch this includes costs such as staff recruitment/training, office set up costs, and branding.
6. The Department for Health (DH) HealthWatch Transition Plan issued in March 2011 is still the key guiding document framing HealthWatch developments.

Local HealthWatch developments

7. Local Healthwatch organisations will have 3 main functions:
 - Influence local health and social care
 - Inform and signpost local people on local services
 - Advice and advocacy

What we are required to do

Local Authorities will be under a duty to ensure there is an effective and efficient local HealthWatch in their area and they will want to take their LINKs, hosts and local communities with them, building a dialogue and working in partnership to decide what will work best in their locality. DH HealthWatch Transition Plan

What we have done

Held a stakeholder session in July to begin the dialogue on what Dudley Local HealthWatch should look like.

Invited relevant Cabinet and Scrutiny councillors to update them on HealthWatch developments.

Constituted a reference group comprised of community group representatives and independents. The group membership primarily arose from the July Stakeholder meeting.

The reference group is chaired by Dennis Hodson and will report to the Shadow Health and Well being Board. The first meeting of the Group was held on 22nd November with around 30 people attending. The group will steer Dudley's HealthWatch development.

Ongoing engagement with Dudley LINK to ensure they feel involved and cognisant of HealthWatch developments.

8. The Government's intention is that all Local HealthWatch will be set up as organisations with their own legal identity, referred to by the DH as a Body Corporate.
9. Further government guidance is anticipated but there has already been some local thinking on the most appropriate structures for the Borough of Dudley. There is strong support for an approach that adopts local and community ownership and where governance in the structure involves active participation of local people and community groups.
10. Commissioning a Local HealthWatch for the borough may be achieved by using either a 'grant-in-aid' funding route or through a more formal procurement route. Either method should encourage flexibility and recognition of community and voluntary sector capacity and to promote a strong sense of local involvement and engagement.

Outcome of Reference Group meeting

11. The reference group made a start on the vision, what constitutes success and key operating issues for Dudley's local HealthWatch.

Key points raised:

12. Governance and Independence

- independence and managing complex relationships in a mature and open way is vital

Engagement and Representation

- HealthWatch must be truly representative of local people, part of the performance framework for HealthWatch would be around public awareness and the extent to which HealthWatch services reach into communities.
- It should have a local base.
- HealthWatch should provide a new way of doing rather than simply replicating or re-branding LINKs.
- It's role around the quality of health and social care services must be developed as this is a real current concern for the general public.

Legitimacy and Accountability

- HealthWatch should have “teeth” in order to affect and champion for change and not just provide ‘tokenistic’ engagement and/or consultation.
- HealthWatch input into the Clinical Commissioning Group was deemed essential.

Next steps

Process and Indicative Timescales

13. Prior to the December announcement by DH of a new start date for LHW organisations the Council had been working to an indicative timeline and milestones presented at appendix 1. This will need to be reviewed in conjunction with the steering Group.
14. Next steps in the development of HealthWatch in Dudley will be taken in conjunction with the HealthWatch Reference Group, HASC Scrutiny Committee and the Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board.

Healthcare Complaints Element

15. From April 2013 local authorities will take on responsibility for commissioning local NHS complaints advocacy services for people requiring support to make a complaint. These services will be accessed through, and in some cases may be provided by, local HealthWatch. We need to consider our position on this.

Finance

16. Government funding of £3.2m will be made available in 2012/13 for start up costs in setting up Local HealthWatch this includes costs such as staff recruitment/

training, office set up costs, and branding. It is envisaged that allocations will be notified to local authorities ahead of the new financial year in April 2012.

Law

17. The Health and Social Care Bill 2011 provides for the establishing of the HealthWatch organisations

Equality Impact

18. Local HealthWatch will further enhance the relevance of health and social care service to local people in diverse communities and will ensure the public and patient involvement in these services is maximised.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that SHWBB note the developments as outlined.



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Appendices

Appendix 1