

**AGENDA ITEM:**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD**

**14 NOVEMBER 2006**

**DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN PATIENT & PUBLIC  
INVOLVEMENT IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To appraise the Overview & Scrutiny Board (OSB) of the proposed changes within the Patient & Public Involvement Framework, in relation to the National Health Service.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. That the OSB notes the contents of this briefing paper and agrees to receive further updates as and when appropriate.

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORT**

3. As Members of the OSB will be aware, the past five years have seen a Department of Health led drive to increase the level of involvement of local communities in the planning of local health services. The Health Scrutiny power held by Middlesbrough Council and other authorities is a very good example of that.
4. Under that power, Health Scrutiny is able to investigate health issues within its area of influence, compile reports with recommendations and expect responses back from the local NHS within a specified time frame. Further to that, when the local NHS is planning/proposing substantial variations to the way services are provided, it is under a statutory duty to consult with Health Scrutiny and pay due regard to the views expressed in that consultation. Should there be disagreement, Health Scrutiny has the ultimate power to refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Health for determination.
5. It should be noted, however, that Health Scrutiny is not the only aspect of the Government's ambition to increase Patient & Public Involvement with health services.

6. At present, there is one Patient & Public Involvement Forum for each NHS Trust, which were intended to be the voice of the patient in the day to day running of the Trust. They are made up of volunteers. They have certain rights to information and access to senior trust officers, together with a right of referral to Health Scrutiny and rights of visitation to facilities managed by the Trust they are connected with.
7. In the Department of Health paper *A Stronger Local Voice*<sup>1</sup> it has been announced that Patient & Public Involvement Forums will be abolished. They will be replaced by a forum called the Local Involvement Network (LINKs).
8. LINKs will bring together parties and individuals from the community and voluntary sector with an interest and involvement in health and social care systems. LINKs will be geographically based rather than focused on specific organisations and will be coterminous with the boundaries of social services authorities. As of October 2006, when the reconfigured Primary Care Trusts replaced the existing ones, 70% of LINKs will also share boundaries with PCTs.
9. LINKs will gather information about local people's needs and their experience of health and social care services. They will analyse the information and share that analysis with appropriate bodies, including Health Scrutiny. LINKs will set their own agendas, have the power to refer matters to Health Scrutiny and will be entitled to receive a response.
10. Local support for the LINKs will be the responsibility of the social services authorities, which will be given funding to secure appropriate arrangements for hosting LINKs through consultation with local groups and a tendering process. The host organisation chosen will develop the LINK, recruit Members, establish good communications and develop and manage the governance structure. Guidance from the Department of Health will be published to assist local authorities to this end.
11. In terms of timeframe, there is very little detail about transition arrangements. The new proposed arrangements require primary legislation and as such will probably take many months to be implemented.
12. To this end, it is proposed that the OSB is updated as and when announcements are made in this regard.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

13. *A Stronger Local Voice: A framework for creating a stronger voice in the development of health and social care services – a document for discussion.* Please see [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> *A Stronger Local Voice: A framework for creating a stronger voice in the development of health and social care services – a document for discussion.* Please see [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

14. *Health Scrutiny Support Programme – Policy Briefing, August 2006. A Stronger Local Voice.* Please see [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

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