

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND SERVICE
IMPROVEMENT

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA'S LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK

This report updates the Committee on the Local Involvement Network (LINK) in Kensington and Chelsea.

FOR INFORMATION

1 LINK overview

- 1.1 Members of the committee will be aware that the Kensington and Chelsea Local Involvement Network (LINK) is an independent voluntary organisation with a membership from the local community who share an interest in improving health and social care services.
- 1.2 LINKs were established across the country following the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, with each LINK supported by a 'host' organisation. Under the Act, LINKs are granted the powers to:
- 'Enter and View' services;
 - request information or make recommendations to commissioners and providers of services and receive a reply within twenty days; and
 - refer issues of concern to relevant health and social care scrutiny committees.
- 1.3 In Kensington and Chelsea the host organisation procured by the Council is Hestia Housing and Support. The LINK team is represented at this committee by Ms Paula Murphy, LINK Co-ordinator.

2 Priorities and activities

- 2.1 Organisation and priority setting

The LINK organises its work via a Management Group and a series of themed sub-groups. Membership of the LINK currently stands at over 660 local people or organisations.

2.2 Through a membership survey, outreach work and feedback from sub-groups, priorities for the year are as follows:

- 'Dignity Champions'
- Access to GPs and dentistry
- Cancer support work
- Early take-up of screening
- Dementia
- Patient and service user satisfaction with mental health services
- Section 117 of the Mental Health Act
- Personalisation of health and social care
- Healthcare for London/Commissioning Support for London
- Quality Accounts

2.3 LINK response to the Health White Paper

The LINK recently held a public consultation event, hosted an online survey and facilitated a LINK Management Group for discussion by residents and stakeholders on the Health White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS'.

2.4 Whilst the principles underpinning the White Paper (e.g. improved choice and control and joined-up services) are welcomed locally, there is a general consensus that the absence of detail and available resources means the actual implications are unclear. A copy of the joint LINK/NHS Kensington and Chelsea to the consultation response is attached as an **Appendix** to this report.

2.5 Cancer screening ambassador project

With local cancer screening services having the second lowest take-up in the country, the LINK launched a cancer screening ambassador project earlier this month, encouraging engagement of local residents, community groups and staff in borough organisations. Ambassadors will inform the community about the signs of cancers, what people can do to help protect themselves, and about available local services.

3 From LINKs to HealthWatch

3.1 The Health White Paper proposes the evolution of LINKs into local "HealthWatch", to become "consumer champion organisations for

patients and communities". Local HealthWatch will be funded by, and accountable to, local authorities. Proposals for HealthWatch formed part of the national consultation on the White Paper over the summer.

3.2 Functions may include:

- funding for providing complaints advocacy services;
- support for individuals to exercise choice over health and social care services;
- the ability to report concerns about the quality of local services to HealthWatch England;
- representation on the new Health and Wellbeing boards so the community has a say in local decisions.

3.3 Subject to the White Paper consultation, legislation to establish HealthWatch is likely to be introduced as part of the forthcoming Health Bill, and local HealthWatch would be in place, subject to legislation, by 2012. Local authorities are expected to play a vital role in ensuring local HealthWatch organisations are supported and successful.

3.4 The Department of Health is supporting a series of opportunities with host commissioners, appropriate Scrutiny Chairmen, LINK teams and members to understand the HealthWatch proposals, identify existing good practice in LINKs, and consider how new proposals can be best rolled out in London once specific funding arrangements are confirmed by Government in December 2010.

3.5 Discussions continue to take place to ensure an effective change management process and smooth transition to the HealthWatch model, building on the successes of the K&C LINK and local context. This includes exploring opportunities for cross-borough working in light of the changing health and social care agenda and to ensure value for money.

3.6 A more detailed update on the proposed arrangements for 2011/12 will be included in the next report to this committee.

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