

Report to: **East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**

Date: **20th March 2008**

By: **Director of Law and Personnel**

Title of report: **Local Involvement Network (LiNk) – update report**

Purpose of report: **To update the Committee on progress with establishing a LiNk for East Sussex and to consider how HOSC will relate to the LiNk.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended:

- 1. To consider and comment on the progress in developing an East Sussex LiNk.**
 - 2. To agree the proposals for HOSC liaison with the LiNk outlined in appendix 2.**
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1. Background

1.1 In November 2007 HOSC noted progress to date in developing a Local Involvement Network (LiNk) for East Sussex. LiNks are intended to replace the current system of Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPIFs) nationally from 1st April 2008.

1.2 East Sussex County Council has a duty to contract with a 'host organisation' which will provide support to the LiNk. HOSC has agreed to monitor this contracting process and the associated preparations for establishing an East Sussex LiNk.

2. National developments on LiNks

2.1 In December 2007 the Department of Health announced the amount of funding which each local area will receive for its LiNk over the next three years. In East Sussex, the County Council will receive £236k in 2008/9, £237k in 2009/10 and £237k in 2010/11 to fund the establishment of a LiNk. Local Authorities are expected to retain a proportion of the funding to cover their costs in procuring a host organisation to support the LiNk and managing the contract with the host organisation, but the majority of the funding is expected to be available to the host organisation and the LiNk itself to fund the LiNk's work

2.3 On 5th March 2008 the Department of Health published supplementary regulations regarding LiNks' powers, governance and transitional arrangements for those areas where the local authority does not have a host organisation in place by 1 April 2008. The regulations will come into force on 1st April 2008. HOSC commented on the parts of the regulations regarding LiNk powers in December 2007 as part of the Department of Health's consultation process. One of HOSC's key responses was that the LiNk powers should apply to children's social care services as well as children's health services. The Department of Health has not changed its view on this matter and children's social care services continue to be excluded from LiNk powers.

3. Procurement of a 'host organisation' to support the East Sussex LiNk

3.1 Since the last update to HOSC in November 2007 the East Sussex LiNk steering group, which brings together PPIFs, voluntary sector groups, NHS and Social Care representatives, has developed the specification which details what is required of the host organisation. This was informed by Department of Health guidance, the views of the LiNk working group (see below for details on this group) and participants at the LiNk stakeholder event held on 24th October 2007.

3.2 In December 2007 the County Council invited four organisations to tender for the contract to provide host organisation services in East Sussex, based on the specification. These four organisations were shortlisted from 11 who expressed interest in bidding for the contract in response to a Council advertisement. One organisation subsequently decided it would not be submitting a tender, leaving three organisations in contention.

3.3 These three organisations were invited to attend a presentation day at County Hall in early February. A panel including the Council's lead officers, voluntary sector representatives and members of the LINK working group were in attendance. The purpose of this day was for the panel to hear details of the organisations' proposed approach and for the bidding organisations to be able to ask questions about the Council's requirements. The panel asked each organisation 10 questions which had been developed by the LINK working group. Following this session, the Council issued the bidding organisations with further information about requirements to enable the tenders to be completed to the best possible standard. The three organisations submitted tenders by the 13th February deadline.

3.4 By early March, the three tenders had been evaluated by a smaller panel comprising a Voluntary sector representative, an Older People's Forum member, a LINK working group member and the Voluntary and Community Services Co-ordinator and Head of Procurement from the County Council. At the time of writing the contract has been provisionally awarded to a preferred bidder. The Council's Voluntary and Community Services Co-ordinator will attend the HOSC meeting on 20th March to provide a further verbal update.

4. Developing a model for the East Sussex LINK

4.1 Alongside the Council's work on the procurement of a host, a county-wide working group has been established to consider the transition to a LINK. This group comprises members of local Patient and Public Involvement Forums, representatives of local voluntary organisations and other interested individuals. The working group has been meeting regularly to discuss how a LINK could work in East Sussex, who needs to be involved and what structures could be considered.

4.2 The group has now developed an initial model for the East Sussex LINK which is attached at appendix 1. The model envisages a core group of LINK participants who would oversee the LINK's activity programme, work with the host organisation and act as a visible point of contact for stakeholders, including HOSC. The model also envisages the establishment of issue-focussed groups to examine particular topics and some 'standing groups' to deal with areas such as communications, monitoring (including visiting arrangements) and evaluation of the LINK's work. It is recognised that this model will be subject to review once the LINK has become established.

4.3 The working group is now considering the make-up of the proposed core group, how best to work with the host on establishing the LINK and how to communicate the LINK's existence more widely across the county. The group have begun communication activities by producing a newsletter about their work and establishing a web presence.

5. HOSC's relationship with the East Sussex LINK

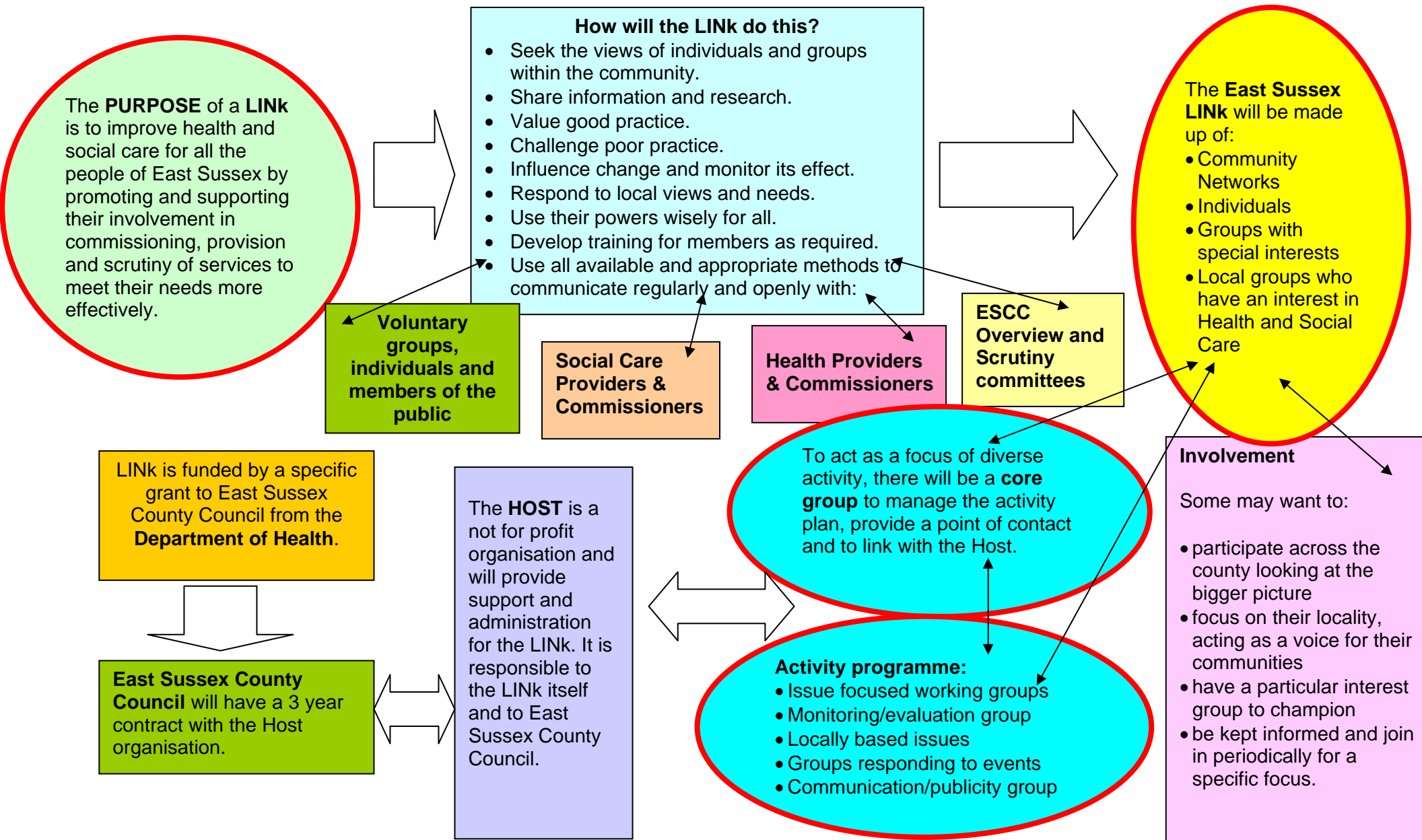
5.1 On 6th March 2008 a seminar on LINKs was held for Members of HOSC, Members of the County Council's Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee and other County Councillors. This aimed to provide more detailed information about LINKs' development nationally and locally. It was also an opportunity for HOSC and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Members to consider how the Committees would relate to the East Sussex LINK

5.2 Several HOSC Members were able to attend this seminar, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Members in attendance developed a series of proposals for developing HOSC's relationship with the LINK which are outlined at appendix 2 for consideration.

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EAST SUSSEX LINK WORKING GROUP
Supporting the development of a Local Involvement Network for East Sussex



Proposals for developing HOSC's relationship with the East Sussex LINK

1. Co-opted membership

HOSC currently has co-opted, non-voting place for a PPI Forum representative (currently the Chairman of Hastings and Rother PPI Forum). HOSC's constitution allows for this place to be transferred to a LINK representative once PPI Forums cease to exist.

Proposal: PPI Forum place on HOSC to be transferred to a nominated LINK representative.

2. Work programmes

It will be crucial for HOSC and the LINK to share work programmes to ensure they are complementary and avoid duplication. It may also be possible to identify areas for joint working through early sharing of potential topics.

Proposals:

- HOSC work programme will be regularly sent to LINK for information.
- LINK work programme will be regularly reported to HOSC.
- Co-opted LINK member will have a key role in communicating work programme changes/new issues to LINK and HOSC and in participating in HOSC work programme development sessions.

3. Liaison Member arrangements

Currently, HOSC Members act as 'liaison Members' for a specific PPI Forum. As the LINK will relate to the whole of East Sussex rather than individual NHS organisations as the PPI Forums do, it will not be possible to transfer the arrangements as they are.

The proposed East Sussex LINK model involves a range of issue-focussed working groups which will change with the LINK work programme. HOSC members may wish to attend meetings of these groups in relation to specific issues. The LINK working group envisages that the LINK will also have a locality focus through the use of existing local networks such as Councils for Voluntary Service meetings.

The current liaison Member arrangements with the PPI Forums have had a helpful additional benefit in that the liaison Members are also able to take a lead on any issues or meetings which arise in relation to the PCT or NHS Trust in question. Loss of these arrangements would also lose this benefit.

Proposals:

- Liaison Member arrangements should continue on issues relating to the individual PCTs and NHS Trusts.
- Details of new LINK issue based groups will be circulated to HOSC members so that Members can participate as appropriate.
- Details of locality based meetings which will regularly feature LINK issues on the agenda will be made available to HOSC members.

4. Referrals

The LINK will be able to refer issues to HOSC for consideration. HOSC will be required to acknowledge receipt within 20 working days and then inform the LINK of how the issue is being considered.

Proposals:

- Referrals will be considered initially by HOSC Chairman and Vice Chairman to avoid undue delay in response.
- All referrals will be noted by HOSC at a formal meeting and appropriate action agreed.
- A simple written protocol will be produced to ensure clarity of process for both LINK and HOSC

5. Meetings

The HOSC Chairman currently holds regular meetings with the Chairmen of the PPI Forums (approx 2-3 times per year). These meetings have been helpful in co-ordinating activity and building relationships.

Proposal:

- Representatives of the LINK core group will be invited to meet with the Chairman of HOSC on a regular basis. The Chairman of Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee will also be invited to attend.

6. General communications with LINK and with public

Proposals:

- The HOSC newsletter will be circulated to LINK core group and participants.
- Information on LINK activities will be included in the HOSC newsletter as appropriate.
- A link to the LINK's website will be added to the HOSC website.