

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

Date: **16th June 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 on establishing a LiNK for East Sussex. To agree a protocol for handling referrals from the LiNK.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended:

- 1. To consider and comment on the progress in establishing an East Sussex LiNK.**
 - 2. To agree the protocol for handling issues referred to HOSC by the LiNK outlined in appendix 1.**
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1. Background

1.1 In March 2008 HOSC noted progress to date in developing a Local Involvement Network (LiNK) for East Sussex. LiNKs replaced the 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' to provide support to the LiNK. HOSC agreed to monitor this contracting process and the associated preparations for establishing an East Sussex LiNK.

2. National developments on LiNKs

2.1 On 1st April 2008 LiNKs came into existence across England and PPIFs were abolished. On that date the Department of Health's supplementary regulations came into force. These outlined the matters LiNKs must include in their annual reports, requirements for commissioners to adapt their contracts with providers to ensure they comply with LiNK powers, and expectations for 'transitional arrangements' for those local authorities who had not been able to appoint a host organisation by the 1 April.

2.2 A survey by the Local Government Association which covered 137 Councils found that 42 Councils had awarded their host organisation contract by the deadline of 1st April 2008 with the remainder expecting to award their contract between April and September 2008.

2.3 It is expected that LiNKs will spend an initial period of up to 6 months establishing governance arrangements, raising awareness, attracting participant groups and individuals, and agreeing a work programme. Support for LiNKs is being provided via the national NHS Centre for Involvement (website: www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk) who have produced a series of guidance documents and provide a helpline and on-line information. They will also be producing template governance documents, such as a code of conduct for undertaking visits, which local LiNKs can adapt to suit local circumstances.

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

3.1 The County Council's Voluntary and Community Services Co-ordinator reported to HOSC in March 2008 that East Sussex Disability Association (ESDA) had been appointed as the host organisation for the East Sussex LiNK. The three year contract with ESDA was in place by 1st

April 2008, making East Sussex one of the 42 areas mentioned above to have a contract in place by the deadline.

3.2 Since the 1st April ESDA has established a dedicated LINK office at their premises in Hampden Park, Eastbourne, a dedicated LINK phone line and an initial website. Temporary staff have been appointed to provide initial support for the LINK and advertisements have been placed in order to recruit the LINK Manager, two LINK development workers and a LINK administrator who will provide support over the remainder of the 3 year contract.

3.3 The East Sussex LINK Steering Group, which brought together PPIFs, voluntary sector, County Council, NHS and Social Care representatives to oversee the procurement process has reviewed its purpose now that the contract has been awarded. The group has decided to continue as a 'LINK Liaison Group' which will have two main roles – to help the LINK establish relationships with health and social care partners and to provide input into the performance management of the County Council's contract with ESDA. The HOSC Scrutiny Lead Officer is a member of this group.

3.4 HOSC will recall that the County Council retained a proportion of the LINK funding from the Department of Health in order to cover the costs of procuring the host organisation and of managing the contract to ensure the LINK receives effective support. An officer has been recruited on a two year contract to work with the Council's Voluntary and Community Services Co-ordinator to manage the contract (the role will be extended to cover the third year of the contract if appropriate). A performance framework has been agreed with ESDA as the basis for performance monitoring. This comprises a set of indicators by which the effectiveness of ESDA's support to the LINK can be monitored and evaluated by the Council.

4. The emerging East Sussex LINK

4.1 From the 1 April 2008 the county-wide working group established to consider the transition to a LINK transformed into the East Sussex LINK itself. This group comprises former members of PPIFs, representatives of local voluntary organisations and other interested individuals. HOSC will recall that the group developed a model showing how the East Sussex LINK could operate, based on a core group and a number of issue focussed and task oriented sub-groups, with various ways for LINK participants to get involved.

4.2 The LINK has nominated an 'interim core group' to work with ESDA to develop the governance arrangements, policies and procedures necessary for the LINK to get up and running. Janet Colvert has been elected as the Chair of this group. The interim core group is working intensively to ensure that the LINK can agree and begin implementing a work programme as soon as possible. It is expected that the LINK will be fully operational by September 2008 when a process for electing a substantive core group to oversee the work programme will be in place.

4.3 Alongside the interim core group's work, the wider LINK is meeting regularly and focussing its activity on awareness raising, publicity and increasing participants' understanding of the areas the LINK will be working on, notably commissioning arrangements and Adult Social Care issues.

5. HOSC's relationship with the East Sussex LINK

5.1 At HOSC's last meeting the Committee agreed a series of ways that HOSC would work with the LINK. This included inviting the LINK to nominate a representative to join HOSC. The Chairman has extended this invitation to the interim core group which has nominated its Chair, Janet Colvert, as the LINK representative, initially until the end of September 2008.

5.2 It was also agreed to develop a simple protocol to show how HOSC would handle issues referred by the LINK. A draft flowchart is attached at appendix 1 for HOSC's agreement.

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