

Wiltshire Local Involvement Network – Update Report For Information

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on progress to tender for an organisation to host and support the Wiltshire Local Involvement Network (LINK).
2. To inform members about interim arrangements that have been put in place since the formal abolition of the Patient & Public Involvement Forums on 31 March 2008.

Background

3. The Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007 formally abolished the Patient & Public Involvement Forums (PPIFs) and placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities with social services responsibilities to put in place provision to host a Local Involvement Network as an arms length body, focussing on the work of health and social care commissioners and service providers in their place.
4. The PPIFs were duly abolished at the end of March and it was intended that LINKs would be up and running as soon as possible after 1 April, although the final deadline for them to be in place is 1 September 2008.

The Wiltshire Involvement Network

5. In Wiltshire the decision was taken to run a short period of engagement prior to drawing up the tender specification, in order for the County Council and the PCT (whose responsibilities will also fall under the remit of the LINK) to understand what the potential members of the new organisation might be looking for in terms of support from the host organisation.
6. Having taken this decision, Wiltshire was not ready to appoint a host at the start of April and it is expected that the contract will now be let in the summer in order for the substantive LINK and host to be in place by the September deadline.
7. Although some other councils have moved to award their host contract more quickly, most have not done engagement on the same level as Wiltshire and subsequently a number of those who went out to tender earlier have experienced problems and been unable to award contracts.

8. Wiltshire, in common with other Local Authorities who have not yet awarded their contract, has been required to put in place interim arrangements for operating a LINK for Wiltshire. In order to fulfil this duty the Health Advocacy Partnership (HAP) has been asked to act as the host organisation for the LINK until the contract is awarded.
9. HAP is currently hosting the LINK on a temporary basis and is receiving applications from people wanting to sign up to become members. There will be provision for members of the LINK to continue to represent patients and the public at PCT and WCC run meetings and committees.
10. The Health OSC has asked for continuity in the stakeholder representation from the LINK during the interim period to enable the former PPIF members, Dr Biggs and Mr White, to continue to attend. When the substantive LINK is in place it will be up to the members of the LINK to agree representation on the OSC and the other bodies where patient and public representatives are required.

Conclusions

10. The process for the appointment of an organisation to host and support the Wiltshire Local Involvement Network is ongoing and the contract is expected to be let in July 2008.
11. The Wiltshire Local Involvement Network must be in place by 1 September 2008.

Financial Implications

12. The Local Authority with social services responsibilities receives funding from central Government for the purposes of contracting a host organisation to support the Local Involvement Network.

Recommendations

- i. The Committee is asked to note the report.
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