

HealthWatch Update Brief

Appendix 1 – Implementation of HealthWatch in Bath & North East Somerset

Local authorities have the freedom to choose how HealthWatch may be provided, and it is the intention to commission the provision of HealthWatch in B&NES from a suitable provider as assessed through an open procurement process. To determine what would be an appropriate specification for Bath & North East Somerset a public consultation process took place between May and July 2011. Stakeholders included the partnership board, the Local Involvement Network (LINK), the health and wellbeing network (including service users and carers), voluntary sector providers, GPs, Council and NHS officers. A seminar was held with partnership board members, three public meetings took place, information was published in Connect, and public pages were created on the Council website where all documents are made available for scrutiny.

The purpose of the consultation was to agree the vision for HealthWatch and to set the principles upon which procurement will now take place.

The vision was approved by the partnership board at its seminar and subsequent public meeting on June 15th. The vision was supported by all stakeholders in subsequent meetings.

At the final public meeting on July 5th the findings of the consultation were presented and were supported as being a fair account of the issues raised during the consultation and as an appropriate set of information to take forward into the procurement process.

During the consultation there has been strong recognition for a joined up agenda between the three elements of health and social care development: HealthWatch as the consumer voice, Policy Development and Scrutiny (PD&S) as the democratic body that oversees local developments, and the Health and Wellbeing Board as local strategic commissioners overseeing health and wellbeing plans and the quality of local provision. The vision is to collaborate on an agreed set of priorities whereby each element of the local system can focus on a common agenda of interest. With these aims in mind there has been consensus on the desirability of HealthWatch having strong links and integration with the Council's PD&S function and the request that a representative of HealthWatch is included within the membership of the panel.

The specification for the HealthWatch tender was drawn up as a result of the consultations referred to above, and we are now in a strong position to procure a provider well before HealthWatch comes into operation on 1st July 2012.