

Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing Report

Date: 15th June 2011

Report Title: HealthWatch Status Report

Agenda Item: 9

List of attachments to this report: None

Summary

Purpose

- 1 To update the Board on progress towards the establishment of HealthWatch and to report on the themes resulting from the current consultation exercise.

Recommendation

- 2 The Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing is asked to comment on the information presented within the report, to note the key issues and to support the direction of travel indicated.

Rationale

- 3 HealthWatch will play a key role in the future operation of health and social care. The Partnership Board will need to be aware of the developments towards the establishment of HealthWatch and to have the opportunity to shape the development of the final service.

Other Options Considered

- 4 None

Financial Implications

- 5 The funding envelope for HealthWatch has not yet been established and will need to be identified before the procurement process commences.

Risk Management

- 6 There are risks that the councils duty to establish a service is not met or that stakeholders are not engaged sufficiently in the design and establishment of the service leading to lack of ownership and support. Project management is underway and consultation taking place to control and manage these risks.

Equality issues

- 7 HealthWatch aims to engage all sections of the community to be influential in shaping services and working towards reducing inequalities.

Legal Issues

- 8 Establishing HealthWatch is a duty of B&NES council under the legislation outlined within the Health and Social Care Bill currently going through parliament.

Engagement & Involvement

- 8 A managed consultation is currently underway involving all key stakeholders and is commented on within the report. A public webpage provides all information and is inviting comment and participation from the public. This report has been viewed by the Council monitoring officer and section 151 officer.

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The Report

Background

- 1 The current health and social care reforms are centred on the fundamental principle that patients and the public must be at the heart of everything our health and care services do.
- 2 The Government has acknowledged that there have been a number of different arrangements for involving people in health and social care over recent years and has expressed an intention to build on what is working well but also establish new structures that will bring even greater benefits. As part of this intent the Health and Social care Bill currently going through parliament has provision in it for the establishment of HealthWatch.
- 3 HealthWatch is being described as an evolution from the existing Local Involvement Networks (LINK) and is expected to give people real influence over decisions made about local services; it will support individuals as well as engaging communities.
- 4 The Local Authority has a duty to commission HealthWatch. Subject to Parliamentary approval both HealthWatch England and local HealthWatch will be introduced from July 2012.
- 5 It is the intention to tender for the provision of HealthWatch in B&NES. An engagement process is underway following which a service specification will be developed and will be published in September.

Purpose of HealthWatch

- 6 HealthWatch covers health and social care. It can be best described as a consumer champion. Its role is to champion the views and experiences of patients, people using services, carers and the wider public.
- 7 The Health and Social Care Bill specifies 2 elements to the proposed structure
 - **HealthWatch England:** A national body operating within the care quality commission providing leadership to local HealthWatch and advising the NHS commissioning Board.
 - **Local HealthWatch:** Acting as consumer champion for local people regarding health and social care services.
- 8 HealthWatch England is currently being developed through the department of health and is not the subject of local engagement. The design and structure for local HealthWatch is currently being considered by Local Authorities and their healthcare partners across England.

Function of HealthWatch

- 9 Local HealthWatch has 3 principle responsibilities:
- **To Influence:** Helping shape the planning of health and social care services
 - **To inform:** Providing information about health and social care services and supporting people in choice.
 - **To advocate:** Acting as a watchdog pursuing peoples interests with local providers.
- 10 HealthWatch is different from Link and has new responsibilities. HealthWatch will need to do all that Link currently does and has the same powers that Link currently enjoy. It also has new duties to provide information and support people in choice. HealthWatch will also have a seat on the new Health and Wellbeing Boards and will operate as a Health and Wellbeing Board member.

Local development to date

- 11 The Partnership Board held a seminar on 20th April 2011 and received a presentation on the outline vision for HealthWatch. This initial vision had been developed through officer engagement, a review of the current and emerging guidance, consultation with Link, the involvement of other stakeholders and participation in the south west network of local authorities and health commissioners.
- 12 The partnership Board approved the outline vision and supported the intention to further engage with local people and principle stakeholders.
- This engagement has been underway during May and will continue throughout June and July. Further consultation has taken place with Link and a stakeholder day gathered views from a varied group of interested parties including third sector, healthcare providers, GPs, commissioners and representatives from other areas where similar developments are taking place. The Health and Wellbeing network held a workshop session focussing on the topic and addressing detailed questions.
- 13 This engagement has consolidated the vision and provided some principles by which further development of the service design can be progressed.

The vision for HealthWatch in B&NES

- 14 HealthWatch will:
- Deliver the 3 operational functions of influencing, informing and local advocacy
 - Operate as a network or brand bringing together the existing infrastructure of engagement and support in B&NES and consolidating it
 - Outreach in communities to be inclusive and accessible to all groups e.g. adults, children, minorities, users, carers & patient groups
 - Deliver information & choice through a signposting function
 - Establish a common agenda of priorities & work alongside partners on those priorities
 - Work within a triangle of activity and influence with effective linkages between commissioners, Overview and Scrutiny and the HealthWatch community.

Key issues

- 15 During the consultation key issues are becoming clear. Principle points are included below.
- 16 The principle purpose of HealthWatch is to represent and champion the consumer voice. Delivering the vision is dependent upon strong relationships developing between HealthWatch, overview and scrutiny, commissioners and providers. HealthWatch will have a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board and it is anticipated that HealthWatch will also have a formalised role on the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. These developments will ensure HealthWatch is an active and inclusive partner in shaping ideas and decision making.
- 17 There is recognition that we do not want HealthWatch to be a separate entity which is stand alone. To do so would duplicate existing involvement structures and would not achieve the potential for collaboration and add value. There is already an existing structure of stakeholder, advice and advocacy groups and it is intended that HealthWatch acts as a coordinating force to bring the inputs from these groups together and to consolidate the consumer voice for health and social care. Some opinions are emerging that suggest HealthWatch may operate as a brand or kite mark whilst other views favour a managed network.
- 18 A clear consensus from the consultation to date is the recognition that HealthWatch needs to operate in a modern and accessible way. Expectations include an emphasis on electronic media to promote access and involvement and to reach out into communities, constituencies and localities so that engagement is as comprehensive as possible within the resources available.
- 19 It is expected that HealthWatch will initiate creative ways to be inclusive of all sectors and will move away from a formalised culture which can restrict involvement, to a more open and creative culture that will be attractive to potential users.
- 20 HealthWatch is for adults and children and it is recognised that the new model must embrace both and achieve effective linkages across both. Adult services and children's services have both evolved engagement and consultation structures that meet individual needs. Alignments across both structures need to be further explored and established.

Next Steps

- 21 Following the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Network and the meeting of the Partnership Board a further meeting of the stakeholder group is planned for July 5th. This will consolidate the views and opinions of the engagement process confirm the vision and key principles and identify the outline information for the specification. The specification will be drafted during July with the procurement process commencing in September.
- 22 The aim is to award the contract in March and for the service to commence in July 2012

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Background papers	The HealthWatch Transition plan: DH Publication

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact the author