

**OXFORDSHIRE PCT  
PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FORUM**

LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORKS (LINKS)

The following notes summarise (within inverted commas) the main facts about setting up LINKS followed by a list of the principal concerns already articulated. In each case the relevant source is first named:

*DOH Consultation on Regulations for LINKS, September 2007:*

“A LINK will be a network of local people and organisations funded by government and supported by an independent organisation, to hold commissioners and providers of care services to account. Their role will be to:

- give everyone a chance to say what they think about their local health and social care services and what is working well and what is not so good
- give people the chance to check how these services are planned and run
- provide feedback on what people have said about services so that things can change for the better.”

Links will have a range of powers to do this which will include the right to:

- make reports and recommendations and get a reply within a set period of time
- ask for information and get a reply within a set period of time
- go into some types of health and social care premises to see what they do
- refer issues to the local Overview and Scrutiny Committee and get a response.”

*Contracting a Host Organisation, DOH, August 2007:*

“Administration of links:

It is the duty of the relevant local authority to make contractual arrangements with a host organisation which will be in place after the commencement of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (October 2007 ). LINKS will then become fully operational after any necessary regulations go through Parliament”

*Getting Ready for LINKS, DOH, August 2007:*

“Preparing for the Future: Early Adopter Programmes (EAPs ) were established in 2005 by Health Commission on two sites, one in the North and one in the South West. PPI Commission established seven Early Adopter programmes in 2006.”

*National Association of PPI Forums, October 2007:*

Summary of Concerns:

- 1 There have been some major changes to the Bill as it passed through the Commons and the House of Lords which have strengthened some areas of concern. But there remain some weaknesses. Links will have no fixed membership.  
Who will monitor the work is within Governance criteria?
- 2 With potentially large number of people being involved it will be harder to exercise influence in NHS
- 3 The appointment of the Host is a major problem in terms of conflict of interest, size,

- experience of staff
- 4 Some social care community areas have been excluded from monitoring arrangements
  - 5 Ambulance, mental Health Trusts and cancer networks have not been organised to cover their very large regions.
  - 6 As yet no mention has been made about the need to pay LINKS members' expenses. [In a rural area this is particularly important as people are travelling quite long distances to get to meetings in Oxford to present their concerns to the PCT]
  - 7 There is no mention of the financial responsibilities of the Host. Who processes the expenses ? Who pays for the indemnity of LINKS members, and how do they know how to budget for this unknown quantity ?
  - 8 There is no access to private providers who are increasingly being invited to provide services.

Mary Judge  
16 November 2007

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