

Title: **Update on Torbay LINK**Wards Affected: **All Wards in Torbay**To: **Health Scrutiny Board**On: **9  
September  
2010**Key Decision: **No**Change to  
Budget: **No**Change to Policy  
Framework: **No**Contact Officer: **Tracey Cabache**☎ Telephone: **01803 208831**✉ E.mail: **[tracey.cabache@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:tracey.cabache@torbay.gov.uk)**

## **1. What we are trying to achieve and the impact on our customers**

- 1.1 The Local Involvement Network (LINK) was established to enable local residents to influence health and social care services in Torbay. The LINK is a statutory requirement introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The LINK:

- Promotes patient and public involvement, and seeks views which can be fed back into local commissioning;
- Has rights to enter and view provider services;
- Comments on changes to local services.

The Torbay LINK has been active since April 2008. It has had a minimal level of outcomes in 2008/09 and 2009/10, but was re-structured in 2010 and has a set of more ambitious outcomes for 2010/11. It currently costs £120,000 per year to run. This level of funding was provided by Government as ring-fenced monies in 2008/09 and became part of the Local Area Grant in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

The White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS' sets out the Government's vision for transforming Health and Social Care. This includes a proposal that LINKs will 'evolve into local HealthWatch, the consumer champions for patients and communities' by 2012. Local HealthWatch will have more roles and responsibilities than a LINK and will feed into a national HealthWatch providing a national voice for health consumers. The White Paper is currently out for consultation.

Either through LINK or a Local HealthWatch the desired outcome is better and more appropriate health and social care services in Torbay.

## **2. Recommendation(s) for decision**

- 2.1 The current recommendation is to continue with the existing LINK hosted by Help and Care until the contract end. To review the service using the agreed Key Performance Indicators in December 2010.
- 2.2 If the level of 2010/2011 performance is acceptable and considered value for money, to extend the current contract to March 2012 (funds permitting), when the LINK is to be replaced by a local Healthwatch.
- 2.3 Following the outcomes of the White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS' to seek the most cost effective way to evolving the LINK into a local HealthWatch in Torbay mindful of the fact that it will be statutory requirement for the local authority to fund.

### **3. Key points and reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1 The LINK has taken some time to develop in Torbay and it is only in this calendar year that it has been able to make significant progress and start to influence services. If support is not at an adequate level this year then the progress made will be undermined.
- 3.2 Given another year the LINK will be able to build on its achievements to date, demonstrate positive changes to the health and social care services and reach a level engagement and capacity that makes it sustainable with a lower level of support. If this consolidation is not achieved the development of a HealthWatch in Torbay will be more costly.
- 3.3 The volunteers and wider group of residents involved with the LINK will transfer to the local HealthWatch (assuming the proposals in the White Paper become statute).

**For more detailed information on this proposal please refer to the supporting information attached.**

**Simon Sherbersky  
Executive Head  
Communities**

## Supporting information to Report 222 2010

### A1. Introduction and history

- A1.1 The Local Involvement Network (LiNK) was established to enable local residents to influence health and social care services in Torbay. The LiNK is a statutory requirement introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The LiNK replaced the Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forums with the aim of including more residents in engagement activities related to health care and to extend the remit to include social care. Torbay had an active PPI Forum. The legislation requires the local authority to commission a host organisation to run a LiNK. The host has to be independent of the local authority and of the agencies providing health and social care services in Torbay including Torbay Care Trust. Through a tendering process Help and Care were identified as the host organisation for Torbay (they also host in a number of other LiNKs in the South West). Their contract runs from April 2008 to March 2011.
- A1.2 Torbay LiNK, as many other LiNKs, found the transition from PPI forums difficult. Many of the PPI Forum members were reluctant for the Forum to be dissolved. With resistant to change and a break down in communication with the host (Help and Care) setting up the LiNK in Torbay became difficult. There was added problems with significant staff changes in 2009 . Stakeholder's perception of the LiNK was not entirely positive as the aims, and development of the LiNK were delayed due to the internal problems. The LiNK was not engaged at a strategic level with appropriate parties as laid down in government guidance.
- A1.3 The introduction of new host staff members in October 2009 saw a significant change in the LiNK .The new Development Officer had a vast amount of local knowledge having worked in the voluntary sector in Torbay for 18 years .of Torbay. The Steward Group as they were known agreed that in its current format the governance structure of Torbay LiNK was not sustainable and was not achieving the ethos of the LiNK . In April 2010 the Steward Group, Torbay Council and the host agreed to restructure the governance of the Torbay LiNK. It was agreed that an independent selection process would take place to recruit new participants whilst also permitting current Stewardship Group members to take part and be reselected.
- A1.4 In July of this year a new Steering Group and Priorities Panel was set up. Much work over the past few months has been to introduce robust governance to ensure some of the problems encountered previously are avoided. The new Development Officer has spent time engaging with appropriate interested parties to work with the LiNK . This has significantly approved relationships between the LiNK in Torbay and interested parties who have indicated a desire to work more closely with the LiNK.
- A1.5 Torbay LiNK has provided information and exhibition stands throughout the year at various venues and events such as Morrison's and Sainsbury supermarkets, Torquay Town Centre and Libraries. Arranged by the host and supported by volunteers the consultation caravan is currently out and about in Torbay for 3 days asking local people about their views on health and social care and what matters to them.

The Development Officer, members of the Steering Group and Priorities Panel have engaged with 98 external organisations and groups raising awareness of the LiNK. In addition the new members of the Steering Group and Priorities Panel bring

further community engagement through their existing involvement with other groups.

The LINK Currently has a membership of over 500 with 22 Active volunteers participating at different levels.

A Community Chest offering grants from a £10,000 fund from the LINK is being made available from Sept to enable small projects that examine the health and social care services they use/or consider services they may need in the future. Work is under way with Torbay View panel revisiting a questionnaire that was sent out when the LINK was first set up to see if public perception has changed about health and social care. The Link is currently supporting a number of projects such as, a Community Matters project, Speak Out In Torbay in research for the equal access to health care in Torbay for people with learning difficulties, a User Lead Event to discuss the impact of the White paper and set up a network group. Torbay LINK will be closely involved in the setting up of a GP advisory group for the Practice Based Commissioning team.

## **Risk assessment of preferred option**

### **A2.1 Outline of significant key risks**

A2.1. Current LINK collapses due to lack of support and/or insufficient funding in 2011/12. The authority will not, therefore, be able to fulfil its statutory responsibility. There have been no budget cuts to LINK in the current year and support has been provided by the Community Partnership Manager to assist in getting the LINK to a good operational level. A budget bid for support to LINK will be submitted for 2011/12 and will be subject the budget setting process.

### **A2.2 Remaining risks**

A2.1 - Failure to engage the LINK at Strategic Level with much attention focused on the spending review and cuts in services. LINKs will be low on the agenda.  
- Lack of clarity and the role the LINK has to play in the community with so much change.  
- Local authority partners assuming LINKs will be disbanded as HealthWatch is established in 2012.  
- Ability to support capacity of communities to be involved and engage in consultations about services, influence key decisions if insufficient funds.

## **A3. Other Options**

A3.1 Because of the statutory requirement for a LINK, and the need for a host organisation, other options are limited.

A new tendering process could be implemented for a host to run the LINK for 2011/12, but this would incur costs and may lead to the loss of existing support staff. This will, however, be considered if

- i) the performance of the LINK in 2010/11 is not acceptable
- ii) there are not sufficient funds for the LINK in Torbay to make a contract extension viable for the current host organisation Help and Care.

#### **A4. Summary of resource implications**

A4.1 There are no resource implications at this stage.

#### **A5. What impact will there be on equalities, environmental sustainability and crime and disorder?**

A5.1 The recommendations will allow for a vibrant LINK in Torbay which can contribute towards the promotion of good community relations and the promotion of equality of opportunity on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief particularly within health and social care services.

#### **A6. Consultation and Customer Focus**

A6.1 LINK is a method of engagement and its development and outcomes are as a result of on-going consultation. As part of the 2010 performance assessment formal feedback will be solicited from the LINK membership.

A6.2 If the recommendations are approved health and social care service users and residents will have a strong voice in influencing Health and Social Care issues – particularly at this time of great change. They will ultimately benefit from better health and social care services.

#### **A7. Are there any implications for other Business Units?**

A7.1 Business planning – The consultation team's work with Torbay Care Trust will be impacted. Their workload might increase if we do not have a LINK that is working effectively

### **Appendices**

#### **Appendix 1**

#### **Documents available in members' rooms**

#### **Background Papers:**

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS – Establishing HealthWatch (Department of Health and NHS)