

24th April, 2012

Local HealthWatch

Wards: All


Portfolios: Cllr Barbara McCracken, Social Care & Health
Cllr Zahid Ali, Communities & Partnerships

Report

1. The Panel is asked to note that this Briefing is based on the best available information to date and that guidance may change. Secondary legislation, making further Regulations about the role and functions of Local HealthWatch, is not expected until November 2012. Final funding allocations for Local HealthWatch will not be made until the Autumn Statement.
2. The Health and Social Care Bill gained Royal Assent to become the Health and Social Care Act 2012 on 27th March 2012. The Act requires the Council to commission a Local HealthWatch organisation by April 2013.
3. Local HealthWatch is intended to be the new consumer champion for health and social care. It will replace the current Local Involvement Network (LiNK) arrangements and have many of the same functions, including involving and engaging service users and exercising 'enter and view' powers. It will also take on additional responsibilities, including the 'signposting' elements of the Patient Advice and Liaison Service, reporting local experiences to HealthWatch England (due to be established by October 2012), and be represented on the local Health and Wellbeing Board.
4. Late amendments (2 March 2012) included in the Act require that the Local HealthWatch organisation will be a body corporate carrying out statutory functions and will be required to be a 'social enterprise'. The Council's Procurement Team advise that any tendering process for the new body will be required to meet EU Procurement Rules as the expected value of the contract for the new body will exceed EU tender thresholds.
5. Authority to start the procurement process was given by Cabinet on 4 April 2012.
6. The Council will undertake a public consultation on aspects of the Local HealthWatch organisation and delivery that are amenable to local control. This is likely to start in late April 2012. This will inform the development of a tender specification to be issued in July 2012. Any subsequent appointment will be subject to Cabinet approval, and it is anticipated that this will be sought in December 2012, to allow lead-in time for the establishment of the new body

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