

## BRIEFING NOTE

**TO:** Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel  
**DATE:** 28<sup>th</sup> August 2008

**RE: Update on the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) development**

### Purpose

This briefing is designed to provide the scrutiny panel with a further update on progress of the Local Involvement Networks development in Walsall.

### Background

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill Part 11 makes provision for the abolition of Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health and Patients' Forums. It imposes a duty on local authorities to make contractual arrangements for the involvement of people to form a LINK

A LINK will be a network of local people, organisations and groups that want to make care services in the borough of Walsall better. They will be expected to represent everyone, as an Inclusive and enabling body with participation from all sections of the local community, reaching out to those who are difficult to involve or are seldom heard.

Each local authority had to procure a host organisation by 1<sup>st</sup> April 08 with the host being responsible for the establishment, maintenance and support of the LINK in Walsall. Cabinet made the decision on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2008 to award the contract to the Carers Federation as the host organisation.

### Carers Federation Update

The carer's federation on commencement of the contract were able to secure local premises, based in Gypsy lane, Willenhall and have recruited staff to support the development of the Walsall LINK. They have won a number of similar contracts around the country and will therefore be able to share best practice and knowledge to support the work in Walsall.

A community event was held in June, in partnership with the Carers Federation and the multi agency steering group who have supported the LINKs progress to date. The purpose of the event was to introduce the host organisation, to the local community and begin discussions about what the Walsall LINK will look like. A feedback report is available on request, or can be downloaded from [www.walsall.gov.uk/links](http://www.walsall.gov.uk/links)

This led to interested individuals being nominated by the 70 representatives at the event to form a core group. The group held their first meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> August and will be meeting regularly between now and the end of September to agree the governance arrangements for the LINK and start to consider the local work plan.

The Carers Federation can be contacted via:  
Jo-Anne Dunn Walsall LINKs Team Leader 01902482425 or by email  
[j.dunn@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:j.dunn@carersfederation.co.uk)

### **Local Authority Update**

The multi agency approach taken for the management of the first stage of the LINKs process has worked well, with good results. It will be recommended that a similar approach is taken to enable a coordinated approach to working with the LINK as it establishes itself.

The recommendation will also include the need to identify an officer to act as a lead for the LINK development. Someone needs to take overall responsibility to ensure the coordination between the various council departments, health partners and the LINK and be responsible for the contract management. The officer would then be supported by key individuals nominated to the multi- agency group.

Work has been undertaken to identify the tasks which the lead officer will need to carry out and the role and function of the multi agency group, however there are obvious synergies with existing stakeholder consultation and engagement arrangements.

Once a link lead is in place a clear route to building relationships between the LINK and the scrutiny panels can be facilitated. The panel are asked to consider how they would like further updates and contact with the LINKs to be facilitated.

### **Regional Activities**

CSIP West Midlands is running a regional event called 'Making LINKs Work' on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September, at Edgbaston Cricket Ground, Birmingham. The aim of the day is to give people who are *actively involved in making their LINK effective and successful* a chance to tackle the issues of most concern, and to build up useful contacts in nearby localities.

This event has nine places open to Walsall; there is an expectation that a range of different views will be represented through these places, with an invitation being extended to the Health and Social Care panel to nominate a member, to attend as one of the Walsall representatives. The panel are asked to consider who would be best placed to act as a representative for Walsall to attend the event in September.

### **Outcome action required**

The panel are asked to:

- Decide how they wish to be kept informed and further involved in the LINKs process
- Identify a representative to attend the September event.

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