

DoH Consultation: Regulations for Local Involvement Networks (LINks)

Legislation is currently before Parliament to establish Local Involvement Networks (LINks) across England to promote Patient and Public Involvement. The Department of Health has issued a consultation on new regulations for commissioners and providers of health and social care services.

Background

Currently Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) is supported through a system of patients Forums. Forums were established in the NHS Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002, and there is one Patients' Forum for every NHS Trust (Acute Trusts, Foundation Trusts, Primary Care Trusts, Mental Health Trusts and Ambulance Trusts etc).

Patients' Forums are supported by the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH), which receives an annual budget of around £28m for direct Forum support and for delivery costs such as the employment and training of CPPIH staff. There are currently around 400 Patients' Forums

The provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill seek to abolish CPPIH and Patient Forums and establish Local Involvement Networks (LINks) in their place.

The Bill confers a duty on each local authority with social services responsibilities to make contractual arrangements to ensure there are means for LINks activities to be carried out. The policy objectives of LINk regulations are to ensure that LINks are able to:

- make reports and recommendations and receive a response within a specified timescale from commissioners of health and social care services (PCTs and local authorities);
- authorise representatives of LINks to enter certain premises and view certain health and social care services;
- request information from health and social care bodies and receive a response within a specified timescale (to be covered by FOI Act); and
- refer health and social care matters to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and receive a response.

DH argues that these regulations are necessary in order to ensure that LINks can carry out the activities set out in the Bill, and to ensure that patients and the public have the necessary levers to be able to become involved in the scrutiny of the commissioning and provision of services.

The consultation was published on 28th September and closes on 21st December. Please visit: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/ DH 078794

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