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| 03/10/11 | Final | Jo Stephenson, Dept of Health | HealthWatch Key Messages |

HEALTHWATCH - KEY MESSAGES

HealthWatch in general

- Subject to the parliamentary passage of the Health and Social Care Bill, HealthWatch will be the new consumer champion for both health and adult social care
- It will exist in two distinct forms – Local HealthWatch, at local level, and HealthWatch England, at national level
- The duty to involve the public in the planning and development of health services, as set out in section 242 of the NHS Act, remains as before
- Updates on HealthWatch developments can be found on the [DH website](#), LINKs Exchange (www.lx.nhs.uk) and the [CQC website](#)
- People can engage in the development of HealthWatch through its online community by contacting healthwatch@nunwood.com

Local HealthWatch

What is it?

- Subject to the parliamentary passage of the Health and Social Care Bill, Local HealthWatch will be established in October 2012. Until then Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will continue to operate as usual
- A Local HealthWatch will be an independent organisation, able to employ its own staff and volunteers, so it can become the influential and effective voice of the public. It will have to keep accounts and make its annual reports available to the public
- The aim of Local HealthWatch will be to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality

What will it do?

- Local HealthWatch will have a seat on the new health and wellbeing boards, ensuring that the views and experiences of patients, carers and other service users are taken into account when local needs assessments and strategies are prepared, such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the authorisation of Clinical Commissioning Groups. This will ensure that Local HealthWatch has a role in promoting public health, health improvements and in tackling health inequalities
- Local HealthWatch will enable people to share their views and concerns about their local health and social care services and understand that their contribution will help build a picture of where services are doing well and where they can be improved
- Local HealthWatch will be able to alert HealthWatch England to concerns about specific care providers

- Local HealthWatch will provide people with information about what to do when things go wrong; this includes either signposting people to, or providing, advocacy for people who want to complain about NHS services
- Some signposting is currently provided by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), as part of their Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) responsibilities. Local HealthWatch will provide, or signpost people to, information about local health and care services and how to access them
- Local HealthWatch will provide authoritative, evidence-based feedback to organisations responsible for commissioning or delivering local health and social care services
- Local HealthWatch can help Clinical Commissioning Groups to make sure that services really are designed to meet citizens' needs
- Local HealthWatch will have to be inclusive and reflect the diversity of the community it serves. There is an explicit requirement in the Health & Social Care Bill that Local HealthWatch membership must be representative of local people and different users of services including carers

Local HealthWatch and LINKs

- Local HealthWatch will evolve from existing LINKs but with additional functions and powers
- Local HealthWatch will build on the good practice of LINKs, establishing relationships with local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), patient representative groups, the local voluntary and community sector and service providers to ensure it is inclusive and truly representative of the community it serves
- In March 2011, the Department of Health (DH) published the *HealthWatch Transition Plan*, the first of a series of documents for local authorities and LINKs. It can be found on the [DH website](#)
- Existing LINKs will be supported to build their skills and maintain momentum through Action Learning Networks – which will identify and share best practice to help all LINKs perform at the level of the best

Local HealthWatch pathfinders

- In August, the Department of Health announced that 75 HealthWatch pathfinders have been selected to test different approaches to the proposed Local HealthWatch functions. These are partnerships of local authorities, LINKs and other relevant organisations
- The Local HealthWatch pathfinders will explore how best to champion patients' views and experiences, promote the integration of local services and improve choice for patients through advice and access to information

The role of local authorities

- Local HealthWatch will be funded by local authorities and held to account by them for their efficiency and effectiveness

- Subject to the passage of the Health & Social Care Bill, local authorities will have to have a Local HealthWatch organisation from October 2012, but will be free to choose how they commission it to achieve best value for money for their communities
- It is expected that local authorities will work in partnership with their existing LINK, voluntary groups and community organisations when designing their approach to commissioning Local HealthWatch
- Subject to the passage of the Health & Social Care Bill, local authorities will have to provide an advocacy service to people who wish to make a complaint about their experience of NHS care from April 2013. Local authorities will be able to commission the service from any provider including Local HealthWatch and may decide to provide it under the banner of Local HealthWatch

HealthWatch England

What is it?

- Subject to the parliamentary passage of the Health and Social Care Bill, HealthWatch England will be launched in October 2012
- HealthWatch England will be a national body that enables the collective views of the people who use NHS and adult social care services to influence national policy, advice and guidance
- It will be a statutory committee of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) with a Chair who will be a non-executive director of the CQC
- HealthWatch England will have its own identity within the CQC, but be able to use the CQC's expertise and infrastructure
- HealthWatch England will be funded as part of the Department of Health's grant in aid to the CQC

What will it do?

- HealthWatch England will provide leadership, guidance and support to Local HealthWatch organisations
- HealthWatch England will provide advice to the Secretary of State, NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor and the English local authorities and they must have regard to that advice
- HealthWatch England will be able to escalate concerns about health and social care services raised by Local HealthWatch to the CQC
- There will be a requirement for the CQC to respond to advice from HealthWatch England

- HealthWatch England will have a strong principle of continuous dialogue with Local HealthWatch, keeping communication lines open and transparent. This will facilitate HealthWatch England's responsibility to provide national leadership and support
- The Secretary of State for Health will be required to consult HealthWatch England on the mandate for the NHS Commissioning Board
- HealthWatch England will be required to make an annual report to Parliament

HealthWatch engagement and consultation

- There has been widespread engagement activity in support of the Government's White Paper and subsequent Health and Social Care Bill. As HealthWatch is amongst the proposed changes, the consultation has included existing LINKs, patient organisations and the wider voluntary sector. Additionally, there have been regional events throughout 2010/11 specifically to facilitate discussion about the plans for HealthWatch
- To inform the development of HealthWatch, the CQC and Department of Health (DH) have jointly established the HealthWatch programme board and its advisory group. The minutes from the meetings of both of these groups are available on the [CQC website](#) and [LINKs Exchange](#)
- The HealthWatch programme board provides strategic oversight and ensures readiness for the launch of both Local HealthWatch and HealthWatch England
- The HealthWatch advisory group provides expert guidance to the programme board so it can advise Ministers on the implementation of the Government's proposals for HealthWatch. The group also works alongside DH and CQC to look at practical ways of ensuring the transition to HealthWatch runs smoothly
- The advisory group has established a number of smaller task and finish (or sub-) groups to focus on specific issues such as securing the HealthWatch identity for HealthWatch England and Local HealthWatch, establishing what a good Local HealthWatch will look like and advising on the transitional arrangements from LINKs to Local HealthWatch
- The CQC has set up an online community for anyone who is interested in HealthWatch to feed in their views (registration is via HealthWatch@nunwood.com). Views gathered from the online community will inform the HealthWatch programme board and its advisory group
- A full membership list for both the HealthWatch programme board and its advisory group, including sub-groups, can be accessed via the online community.