



www.nalm2010.org.uk

National Association of LINKs Members

Press Release – February 22nd 2012

Plans to create powerful patient-led bodies abandoned by Ministers

Health Minister Earl Howe revealed on February 20th that the government's plans to 'revolutionise NHS accountability through a power shift from Whitehall to patients, communities and the public' are to be substantially watered down.

Healthwatch, the government's proposed statutory consumer watchdog for health and social care, will be stripped of its statutory status and will have virtually no statutory powers of its own. Health Ministers also intend to make local Healthwatch accountable to its local authority – a body it monitors as a provider and commissioner of social care services. The government will have to amend its own Bill to remove the statutory status it originally intended for Healthwatch. Ministers claim that their plans will strengthen local democratic legitimacy and encourage local authorities to listen to their communities.

The government's plans will make it almost impossible for most Local Involvement Networks (LINKs - the NHS and social care watchdog) to evolve into local Healthwatch and will result in vast sums of money being spent on commercial procurement of Local Healthwatch – in some cases through the EU procurement route.

Malcolm Alexander, Chair of NALM said: "the Minister's proposal is the death knell for effective and powerful public involvement in health and social care. Governments have been stripping public involvement organisations of their powers for the past 10 years. They now plan to spend £60 millions on yet another new system of public involvement that will have even less influence than our current system. Clearly, local authorities were worried about Healthwatch having too much power and the government has capitulated to their demands. Healthwatch without its statutory status delivers little for local people – the government is giving all the levers of influence to local authorities and GPs and virtually nothing to the community. The coalition's commitment to transferring power

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, 30 Portland Rise, N4 2PP

Tel: 0208 809 6551/07817505193 Email: NALM2008@aol.com

Ruth Marsden, Vice Chair, The Hollies, George Street, Cottingham, HU16 5QP

Tel: 01482 849 980

Email: ruth@myford.karoo.co.uk

downwards to the citizen and to putting the citizen at the centre of decision-making is clearly empty rhetoric. We are seeking an urgent meeting with Earl Howe.

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, NALM

Nalm2008@aol.com

Tel: 07817505193 / 0208 809 6551

Ruth Marsden, Vice Chair,

ruth@myford.karoo.co.uk

Tel: 01482 849 980

Note for editors:

Malcolm Alexander is the Chair of the National Association of LINKs Members. He can be contacted on: 0208 809 6551 or 07817505193 or NALM2008@aol.com

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) were set up by statute in 2008 to give citizens a stronger voice in how health and social care services are delivered.

NALM is the national organisation of Local Involvement Network members and was formed on April 1st 2009. NALM aims to stimulate more powerful approaches to public and user involvement and build a major grass roots movement of LINKs and LINKs' members which can influence government policy.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2008 established Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) to promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local NHS and care services. They do this by monitoring services and obtaining the views of people about their experiences of care and making reports and recommendations about how services should be improved, to persons responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising local care services.

LINKs are made up of volunteers, supported by a small professional team. LINKs have responsibility for scrutinising all health and social care services in a local authority area. They are tasked, by statute, with providing the voice of those who use our health and social care services.

Despite the mantra of "nothing about me without me", LINKs were not included in the NHS Future Forum. LINKs are already struggling even before they take on this extra Local HealthWatch work.

It is intended that Local HealthWatch be the voice of the user and patient, and a guardian of patient safety. LINKs and Local HealthWatch should be the first line of defence against another Mid-Staffs. This role becomes even more critical with the cuts to the CQC.

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, 30 Portland Rise, N4 2PP

Tel: 0208 809 6551/07817505193 Email: NALM2008@aol.com

Ruth Marsden, Vice Chair, The Hollies, George Street, Cottingham, HU16 5QP

Tel: 01482 849 980

Email: ruth@myford.karoo.co.uk

The Coalition promised public empowerment.

What happened?

They said:

1. Health and care systems would be integrated around the needs of patients and users.
2. Strengthen patients' and users' ability to have their voice heard.
3. Shift focus to patient reported outcome measures and patient experience measures.
4. Revolutionise NHS accountability - greater accountability to patients and the public.
5. Promote public health with a new sense of community and social responsibility.
6. Reform the system of social care to provide much more control to individuals and their carers, easing the cost burden that they and their families face.
7. Run an efficient and effective Department of State - provide an efficient and effective service to the public.
8. The Department will no longer cause uncertainty within the NHS by constantly changing strategies. We will make the necessary structural changes to put the NHS on a long term and sustainable footing, and we will do so on a clear and achievable timetable.
10. The Coalition is committed to a programme of reform that will turn government on its head.
11. We want to bring about a power shift, taking power away from Whitehall and putting it into the hands of people and communities, and a horizon shift, making the decisions that will equip Britain for long term success.
12. For too long citizens have been treated as passive recipients of centralised, standardised services.
13. This Government is putting citizens back in charge.
14. Structural Reform Plans are part of this shift of power from government to people.

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, 30 Portland Rise, N4 2PP

Tel: 0208 809 6551/07817505193 Email: NALM2008@aol.com

Ruth Marsden, Vice Chair, The Hollies, George Street, Cottingham, HU16 5QP

Tel: 01482 849 980

Email: ruth@myford.karoo.co.uk

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, 30 Portland Rise, N4 2PP

Tel: 0208 809 6551/07817505193 Email: NALM2008@aol.com

Ruth Marsden, Vice Chair, The Hollies, George Street, Cottingham, HU16 5QP

Tel: 01482 849 980

Email: ruth@myford.karoo.co.uk