

[NASG etc]

11th June, '07

Dear Chief Executive,

Local Involvement Networks

You will be aware of the government's proposals for the introduction of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs). These will be based within local authorities with social services' responsibilities. The local authority will have the responsibility of setting up the 'host organisation' for the LINK.

The necessary legislation is currently with Parliament and the government intends that LINKs should be in place for March 2008. We have real concerns that this deadline is impossible to meet.

Many local authorities still have not designated a named contact-person for LINKs' development, and it will be November before the Strategic Spending Review allocations are published and the budgets for LINKs are known. The procurement process for the 'host organisation' for LINKs will be subject to tender, very possibly with OJEU. It seems highly unlikely that any arrangements can be in place by March 08 to ensure seamless transition for Patient and Public Involvement members and others.

We ask that as organisations responsible for initiating arrangements for the future of independent patient and public involvement in health, you make representations to the Minister of State, Rosie Winterton, asking for the abolition of PPI Forums to be postponed.

Yours etc

Guidance note for NASG: **The 'Gap'**

1. The momentum towards the proposed abolition in March 08 of CPPIH and PPI Fs is not to be matched by a commensurate development of arrangements to institute LINKs. There will be a 'gap'.
2. This will lose the heritage of PPI Forums and sink meaningful PPI.
3. Overtures to Ministers, D of H, Meredith Vivian et al, pointing out that their adherence to the current timetable means the 'gap' is inevitable and the consequences dire, have fallen on deaf ears.
4. Evidence for the 'gap' is indisputable. In Nov. 06, the Minister of State, Rosie Winterton, wrote to the CEs of all local authorities with social service responsibilities, telling them to nominate a named contact-person for the development of LINKs. By April 07, it was evident many of them still had not done so. (See 'LINKs Bulletin', D of H, Also Florella Baker, D of H) A further instruction from the Minister has elicited limited response. There remains within many I.a.s no ownership of the proposed LINKs.
5. Further, until the report in November '07 of the Strategic Spending Review, there will be no indicative budgets for Links. Until there is a budget, local authorities will not progress to tendering for the 'host'. Many I.a.s may receive LINKs' budgets at over the threshold-amount (£150k) which triggers the requirement to tender Europe-wide. Advertisements placed in OJEU have an advertise-to-closing-date window of three months. Then any bids have to be assessed etc etc.
6. Rosie Winterton wrote to PPI Forum members in Dec '06, "I take this opportunity to let you know that it is not our intention to abolish patients forums, nor CPPIH, until LINKs can be established."
7. Meeting the deadline of March 08 for the establishment of LINKs is now demonstrably impossible.
8. It is proposed that the local authorities be briefed to ask the Minister to delay the abolition of PPI Fs until LINKs are properly in place.
9. The 152 I.a.s are spread across the 9 Regions of the PPI Forums. A letter, evidencing the impossibility of compliance within the timeframe, will go from NASG to the CEs of the I.a.s, asking the CEs to make representations to the Minister to delay the abolition of PPI Forums.

RM 9th June, '07