February 27th 2012

Plans to create powerful patient-led bodies to be abandoned by Ministers

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SIR – The Coalition Government promised to ensure greater NHS accountability to patients and the public. We believe this aspiration has now been abandoned.

Local HealthWatch is a statutory system which monitor wards, clinics and care homes, and carries the public's voice to the NHS and local authorities when services are unsafe or don't meet local need. But on the day of health Bill summit last week, the Government announced that it intends to strip Local HealthWatch of it statutory status. Health ministers also intend to weaken Local HealthWatch, by making its bodies accountable to their local authorities – the bodies they monitor and hold to account as providers of social care.

The Government has allocated £60 million for the new Local HealthWatch, which we predict will have less influence than the current system and will be too weak to intervene to prevent the type of disasters that have traumatised residents of many nursing homes and hundreds of patients at the Mid Staffordshire Hospital.

The Government talks about putting patients and the users of services at the heart of health and social care and empowering them with greater choice and control. But it is hard to see how this will be achieved by removing the statutory status of Local HealthWatch. As leaders of Local Involvement Networks (LINks), which monitor health and social care services, we urge health ministers to abandon their plans to strip Local HealthWatch of its statutory status.

Malcolm Alexander
Chairman

Ruth Marsden
Vice-Chairman

National Association of LINks Members

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112 signatories representing 62 LINks + NALM

Signed:

Malcolm Alexander, Chair	-	**NALM** (National Association of LINk Members)
Ruth Marsden, Vice Chair	-	NALM
Daniel Casson	-	**Barnet LINk**
Maria Nash	-	Barnet LINk
Dipak Jashapara	-	Barnet LINk
Terry Specter	-	Barnet LINk
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Judith Cunningham-Willey	-	Bedford LINk
Jean Ceiriog-Jones	-	Bedford LINk
Bob Smith	-	**Bedfordshire LINk**
Carolyn Holmes	-	Bedfordshire LINk
Sandra Ridgway	-	Bedfordshire LINk
Ted Jolliffe	-	Bedfordshire LINk
Bert Sackett	-	Bedfordshire LINk
Paula Hill	-	Bedfordshire LINk
Sandra Wakeford, (Chair)	-	**Bexley LINk**
Prof. Harbhajan Singh	-	Bexley LINk
Dr Rob Ryckborst	-	**Birmingham LINk**
Elsie Gayle	-	Birmingham LINk
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Julie Mott	-	Bromley LINk
Peter Moore	-	Bromley LINk
Patricia Choppin	-	Bromley LINk
Neil Woodnick, (Chair)	-	**Camden LINk**
Veronica Brinton	-	Camden LINk
Ruth Appleton	-	Camden LINk
Vishy Harihara	-	Camden LINk
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Nora Dolphin	-	**Cheshire West & Chester LINk**
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Graham Webster	-	**Cornwall LINk**
Alan S. Alexander (Chair)	-	**Cumbria LINk**
John Martin	-	**Derbyshire County LINks**
Judith Woolley	-	Derbyshire County LINks
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Alfred Boom	-	Devon LINk
Dr. Geoffrey Mitchell	-	**East Riding of Yorks LINk**
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Helena Kania (Chair)	-	**Haringey LINk**

Med Buck (Chair)	-	**Havering LINk**
Martyn Macphee	-	**Hertfordshire LINk**
Allan Lloyd (Chair)	-	Herefordshire LINk
Denise Denton	-	**Hull LINk**
Robert Jones	-	**Isle of Wight LINk** (personal capacity)
Natalie Teich	-	**Islington LINk**
Sandra Berry (Chair)	-	**Kingston's HealthWatch Pathfinder**
Polly Healy	-	Kingston's HealthWatch Pathfinder
Helen Hutson	-	Kingston's HealthWatch Pathfinder
Jean Moxon. (Chair)	-	**Kirklees LINk**
Cath Gleeson	-	Kirklees LINk
John Baker (Chair)	-	**Leicestershire LINk**
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Mike Llewellyn Cox	-	Norfolk LINk
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April Baker	-	**North East Lincolnshire LINk**
David Greenwood	-	**North Somerset LINk**
Allen Nevin	-	**Northumberland LINk**
Ken Patterson	-	Northumberland LINk
Catherine Willmett	-	**North Yorks LINk**
Andrea Darrington	-	North Yorks LINk
Sylvia Tibbitt	-	North Yorks LINk
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David Montague-Smith	-	Worcestershire LINk

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115 signatories representing 63 LINks + NALM