

Guidance note for NASG

The 'Gap'

1. The momentum towards the proposed abolition on 31st March 2008 of CPPIH and PPIFs is not to be matched by a commensurate development of arrangements to institute LINKs. There will be a significant 'gap' perhaps lasting six or more months - this is indisputable.
2. 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 local authorities may receive LINKs' budgets at over the threshold-amount (£150k) which triggers the requirement to tender through the European Journal. Advertisements placed in OJEU have an advertise-to-closing-date window of three months. Then any bids have to go through the full bidding and assessment process.
3. 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 local authorities no ownership of the proposed LINKs.
4. This will lose the heritage of PPI Forums - the knowledge of members about their local health services and the value of the networks and relationships with providers and commissioners that Forums have developed.
5. 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 with severe consequences for the monitoring and safety of the NHS have fallen on deaf ears.

Nor. KSS
Steevy
Group

[NASG etc]

Draft letter to Chief Executives of Local Authorities in England

21st June, 2007

Dear Chief Executive,

Establishment of Local Involvement Networks by Local Authorities

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 and each local authority will have the responsibility of setting up the 'host organisation' to provide administrative support for LINKs.

The legislation to establish this new system (The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill) is currently with Parliament and the Government intends that LINKs should be in place for March 2008 when Patients' Forums are abolished. This deadline is impossible to meet and were Forum to be abolished in March 2008, monitoring of the NHS by members of Patient's Forums would cease and result in increased risks to patient safety.

Many local authorities are yet to designate 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 a seamless transition from Patients' Forums to LINKs.

We ask that as organisations responsible for initiating arrangements for the future of independent patient and public involvement in health and social care, you make representations to the Minister of State, Rosie Winterton, asking for the abolition of Patients' Forums to be postponed for a period of xxxx or until the new LINKs organisations have been established and are operational.

The National Association is etc.

Yours etc