

3 January 2012

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To:

Leaders of Local Authorities
Chief Executives of Local Authorities
Directors of Children's Services
Directors of Adult Social Services

Copy:

Local Involvement Networks
Healthwatch Programme Board and Advisory Group

Dear Colleague

Local Healthwatch

I am writing to let you know about the announcement made (today) by Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley.

The announcement covers:

1. a new start date for Local Healthwatch
2. funding made available for the Healthwatch pathfinders
3. new funding of £3.2m for start up costs for Local Healthwatch; and

1. A new start date for Local Healthwatch in April 2013

Subject to parliamentary approval, Local Healthwatch will be the local consumer champion for patients, service users and the public. It will have an important role to champion the local consumer voice, not least through its seat on the local health and well being boards.

The new date for establishing Local Healthwatch in April 2013 will support the need to align this closer to the establishment of other new bodies such as the health and well being boards. The extension will also support preparations for implementation and enable Healthwatch England (which will be established in October 2012) to provide the leadership and support to Local Healthwatch organisations.

2. Funding made available for the HealthWatch pathfinders in Q4 of 2011/12

The funding being made available to each of the 75 Healthwatch pathfinders is in response to stakeholders seeking resources from the Department to support them in delivering their work. Whilst how this will be spent is for each pathfinder to agree with their delivery partners, there are three areas where value for money could be sought:

- demonstrate testing elements of proposed Healthwatch functions

- stakeholder events to involve local people
- develop wider community engagement
- rewarding and reimbursing volunteers (particularly from LINKs) for their contribution
- contributing to their regional network to accelerate shared learning.

The funding for the pathfinders will be allocated through the local government Formula Grant route and we will be in contact with each pathfinder local authority to make them aware of this.

In addition to this, the Department will be funding expertise from the sector to draw together and share the learning and it will be important for the Healthwatch pathfinders to support this work to gather the information from them so to inform planning for the implementation stage in 2012/13.

3. New funding of £3.2m for Local HealthWatch in 2012/13

The new funding of £3.2m that will be made available in 2012/13 is for start up costs in setting up Local Healthwatch and includes costs such as staff recruitment/training, office set up costs, and branding; the funding will be allocated as part of the DH learning disabilities and health reform grant in 2012/13.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, local authorities will need to continue to provide a Local Involvement Network (LINK) and funding for this continues to be allocated as part of the local government Formula Grant in 2012/13 and the £3.2m will be in addition to this.

The Department will provide further advice for planning purposes about funding for Local Healthwatch in 2013/14, as part of the Local Government allocations notifications at the end of 2012.

Yours sincerely,



David Behan
Director General for Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships