



KENT & MEDWAY NETWORKS LTD



Kent and Medway



a LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK



Gateway Reference: 15679

11 May 2011

Kasey Chan
Department of Health
Room 213
Richmond House
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Dear Kasey

Local HealthWatch Pathfinders in 2011-12

Thank you for the invitation to apply to become part of the Pathfinders Programme for Local HealthWatch. We wish to apply and there is strong support for the application from the Kent LINK, Kent County Council, the District Councils in Kent¹, Kent and Medway Networks (the Kent LINK host) as well as the local NHS. Nick Chard, Chairman of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Kent County Council has also offered his support to this bid. We feel that we have a lot to offer the Local HealthWatch Pathfinder programme:

Building on Existing LINK Success

- The Kent LINK is considered to be one of the most successful. It regularly produces reports highlighting areas for improvement in commissioning and provision which provides evidence of their understanding of the health and social care needs of the people of Kent, at both a County and more local level. The Kent LINK has experienced and dedicated Governors and well a thought-out and stable governance structure, backed up with clear policies, with the flexibility to make changes when circumstances dictate.

¹ Ashford Borough Council; Canterbury City Council, Dartford District Council, Dover District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Shepway District Council, Swale Borough Council, Thanet District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

- A successful host organisation Kent and Medway Networks enjoys the full support of the Kent LINK. They consistently demonstrate strong levels of professionalism and have an experienced and skilled workforce. KCC considers KMN to perform over and above the current contractual terms and is currently in the process of renewing the contract. KMN is also Host to the Medway LINK and so are well-placed to share areas of good practice across both LINKs. For example The Medway LINK is already adding the formation of PPGs (the focal point of this application) in its area to their Work Programme for this coming year as they have been impressed by the success of Kent LINK in this field.

Kent County Council has a reputation for innovation with their “can do” philosophy, a commitment to community engagement and listening to the public. The Council’s three priorities include putting the citizen more in control whether that is as individuals, local communities or through their democratic representatives. “Bold Steps for Kent” published in December 2010 states that “...power and influence must be in the hands of local people so they are empowered to take responsibility for their own community and service needs - reducing the role of the state and encouraging the growth of the Big Society”. The application for the Local HealthWatch Pathfinder programme will enhance this stated commitment and as such enjoys the support of elected members and senior officers.

Building on Partnerships that Already Work

The Kent LINK, has mature and good working relationships with all local NHS Trusts and has seats on various Boards Both PCTs have offered help and support in the transition to Local HealthWatch and have well-developed plans to ensure that their skills and knowledge are also passed on to successor organisations.

The strengths of all these organisations are further enhanced by a strong commitment to partnership working which will equip them to take up the new ways of working set out in the Health and Social Care Bill

Kent’s potential for developing Healthwatch

Kent is well placed to test out and share the issues pertinent to a large, diverse, two tier authority. There is wide variation in levels of deprivation which are well documented in national statistics, resulting in pronounced health inequalities across the County. The different needs of communities such as the Sikhs, Gurkhas and travellers have been recognised in the current work of the LINK. There is also a substantial range of communities within the County ranging from the isolated communities of the Romney marsh, to the ex-mining communities of East Kent as well as the deprived seaside towns in the Margate and Ramsgate but also there are the affluent communities in West Kent around Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Kent is close to London and the European continent and is recognised as a major gateway into the country not only for migrants from the EU but also well beyond.

KCC has been accepted onto the Health and Wellbeing Board Early Implementer Programme and there are a number of Practice Based Commissioning Groups, operating in very different ways, which are part of the

GP Consortia Pathfinder Programme. Strong relationships have been built between KCC and the emerging GP Consortia. If successful in our application, we would expect the work we do as part of the Local HealthWatch Pathfinder Programme to both support and be supported by the other transition programmes.

Our Proposed Pathfinder Focus

The Focus Area that the Kent LINK and its partners are particularly keen to progress involves Patient Participation Groups. The project would comprise three integrated elements:

1. Building on the work of the Patient Participation Groups, already well established in East Kent, and taking up the opportunities in the guidance given in the "Patient participation directed enhanced service for GMS contracts" issued this month.
 - We aim to increase the numbers of PPGs across Kent. We will explore how the Patient Participation Groups can influence health and social care services
 - We will identify effective ways of engaging with and representing communities at GP Practice and Consortia level and how the patient and public voice might then be better represented at all local authority levels.
 - We will aim to build up a cohesive and sustainable relationship between the Local HealthWatch and the PPGs and develop effective, two way communications that will give the public a variety of ways to input to health and social care commissioning and provision decisions. This work will complement parallel initiatives intended to support emerging GPCCs with their Patient and Public engagement responsibilities.
 - The ultimate aim of all of this work is to give the public the opportunity to get involved and to contribute to decision-making.
2. Identify the learning requirements that will enable local people to participate more effectively in the new environment of enhanced community engagement. For example :
 - influencing skills, negotiation techniques, understanding and promoting the integration of health and social care services

Within the relatively short timescales of the Pathfinder Programme, we aim to identify learning needs and appropriate tools and techniques; determining

exactly how these needs will be met. We will set up learning opportunities to meet them and this work is likely to continue after September as part of the ongoing Kent LINK/Local HealthWatch Transition Plan. We hope that the relationships we build during the Pathfinder Programme will assist us all in continuing to share good practice with other stakeholders. An outcome of this work would be to support the principles of the Big Society, by building up social capital and so empowering citizens to become more involved in the decisions about their local services

3. Use the existing and new skills and expertise of both LINK and PPG for the benefit of the new Local HealthWatch Information and Signposting service; KCC has been 'green flagged' for the Gateway service. This service would be an obvious conduit for information, and signposting, KCC has also set up a Kent Healthwatch which currently provides a signposting service; both Kent PCTs run successful Patient Advice and Liaison Services with staff whose skills in this area we are keen to retain.

We are currently working on a detailed timeline for the project and have included a draft proposal of how we see the work progressing.

In Summary

These proposals support the fundamental approach detailed in "Equity and Excellence – "no decision about me without me". The focus area will also support and celebrate the independence of the Kent LINK and will complement their work programme for the year. This will be achieved through three interconnecting elements

- supporting and extending the set up of Patient Participation Groups,
- on Learning and Skill requirements of participants for community engagement and
- fitting Information and Signposting requirements to the needs of the local population

This work will have value and traction across other health and social care economies. Whilst there has been some work on the training and development needs within healthcare organisations (NICE, Picker), there has only been limited work to develop the skills required by the general public.

This project would begin to fill that gap and could provide guidance for emerging GP Commissioning Consortia going forward and for Health and Wellbeing Boards

In identifying this focus area, we are also identifying part of the transition work that all LINKs, Hosts and Local Authorities need to accomplish. KCC and the Kent LINK are working together to create a development fund to support the transition. We have already identified staffing resources in KCC, KMN and in PCTs involved in community engagement and in learning and development. The extra costs of the pathfinder programme are likely to be mainly for project work which we estimate to be approximately £28,000. We can offer to meet

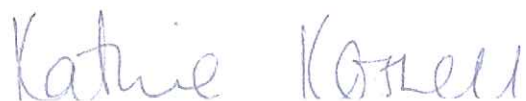
some of these costs through the Development Fund but may also require some financial support from the Department of Health.

Conclusion

Kent is keen to take advantage of the opportunities that NHS Reform offer and play a part in the successful transition of health and social care services, both locally and nationally. We are confident that the learning and outcomes we will derive from the project could be shared and rolled out nationally

We look forward to a positive response to our application.


Yours sincerely



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Managing Director
Kent County Council



Ann Sutton
Chief Executive
Kent & Medway Cluster




Roger Gough
Cabinet Member for Health Reforms
Kent County Council



John Fletcher
Chairman, Governors' Group
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Brenda O'Neill
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Nick Chard
Chairman of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Draft LHW Proposed Timeline

