

PPI Review – further information for Forum members

13 July 2006

While there are many areas of detail still needed about the proposals we hope you will find these questions and answers helpful in understanding the plans announced by the Department of Health.

Why are we getting abolished, just at a time when we are getting recognised and performing well?

PPI Forums have been recognised as performing well with many significant achievements. However they have been identified as needing to change to match the major changes in the NHS e.g. Trust reconfigurations, the move towards the commissioning of services by a plurality of providers and the Government's Choice agenda.

Is there a formal consultation around these new proposals?

There is no formal consultation; however the Department of Health is very keen to hear from PPI Forum Members and interested organisations about your views on the proposals. You can respond to the questions in their proposals, by emailing your comments and views to ppimailbox@dh.gsi.gov.uk or write to the PPI Team, 692D, Skipton House, 80 London Road, London DE1 6LH, no later than 7th September 2006.

Is there an appeals process or anything we can do to influence/change Government proposals?

There is much that can be done to influence the proposals. Firstly you can become involved in the discussions by responding to the opportunities provided by the Department of Health's document, 'A Stronger Local Voice', as well as making contact with your local Member of Parliament (MP) to make your views known. The CPPIH is currently organising a meeting at the House of Commons for PPI Forums, when the House sits again in October. We will be providing more information on this shortly.

How were Forums involved/consulted with in this process?

Forum members have been involved in this review at several key stages. The evidence taken into consideration by the Expert Panel included the messages heard from Forum Members through the regional workshops held by the Department of Health last year as well as directly from individual members via the online questionnaire and further correspondence. Information was also taken from the responses to and the consultation events attended by PPI Forum members on the Government's White Paper 'Choosing Health', during 2005.

Will the CPPIH present a national response on behalf of PPIFs following the Area Events?

Yes. We will be sending a summary of all your comments at the recent Area events to the Department of Health, and this will also be sent to all PPI Forum Members through the August Forum Focus newsletter.

Timescales

When will my Forum be disbanded?

No specific timescales have been announced. Legislation will be required to make any changes to existing Forum responsibilities and this will take time. The legislative process can be a long and complex one. We are pressing the Department of Health to reveal their timetable as a matter of urgency. In the meantime there is a great deal for Forums to do especially with all the changes taking place in the NHS.

Is there still a role for PPI Forums until the new plans come into place?

Absolutely! PPI Forums still remain the only organisations that provide volunteers with statutory powers over the right to information, inspection and monitoring. Forums can ensure patients and your local community have a say in how local health services are delivered. With the NHS changes currently taking place, it is more vital than ever that PPI Forums remain active in their unique responsibility to provide the voice of the patient in local health decisions.

Local Involvement Networks

What will the new local involvement networks look like?

The Department has described LINKs in the document "A Stronger Local Voice". There is obviously more detail to be developed and the Department is asking for your response to questions in that document to help develop these details.

Will Forums be asked to have any formal input into new arrangements based on their experiences?

The Department of Health's document 'A Stronger Local Voice' includes the opportunity for PPI Forum members to send their views and comments on the proposals for patient and public involvement.

Will there be a role for PPI Forums or individuals in the networks?

In the Department of Health's document 'A Stronger Local Voice', they state that 'membership includes user groups, local voluntary and community sector organisations and interested individuals.'

When will the Local Involvement Networks start operating?

The Department of Health has not published any firm timescales for this. We know that legislation will be required to make changes to existing Forum responsibilities and this will take time. We don't expect it will happen until 2007 and we will be pressing the Department to provide a smooth transition for Forum members, for Forums' workplans and to ensure there is no gap in the necessary public involvement with decisions that are taking place in the NHS.

What geographical area will the Local Involvement Networks Cover?

LINKs will be established for every local authority area with social services responsibilities, such as Hampshire County Council.

Forums' operation until closure

Why should we remain with the Forum when the future is uncertain?

It is crucial that NHS Trusts are held accountable to patients and the public ensuring the community has a say in health delivery. Your experience and knowledge will also be vital in responding to the new proposals.

Will you continue to recruit to my Forum in the interim?

We will continue to actively recruit to the Forums. It is essential that whilst Forums remain, you have sufficient people to carry out your work plans and ensure successful outcomes for your community.

How can we retain existing Forum members?

By continuing with the vital work that so many of you are currently involved with and publicising it locally. We really hope that members will see the worth in ensuring that their communities have an active voice in health at this vital stage for the NHS. PPI Forums up and down the country are making a greater impact than ever before. PPI Forums and their work are now being quoted in Parliament and publicity surrounding the PPI Forums Fair Talk campaign alone in May was reported in the national media.

We hope that you will appreciate the impact your Forum is making and use your experience and knowledge to help shape the future arrangements.

Will we still continue to be supported by our current FSO until the plans are in place?

The CPPIH is committed to ensuring that support is available to Forums at least until the Commission itself is abolished (expected summer 2007).

All FSOs are currently contracted to provide support to the Forums until December 31st 2006.

We have now started a closed tender process in which current FSOs can apply to provide support services to all Forums from 1st January 2007 until the abolition of the Forums.

We welcomed Forum Member input into the tendering process last year and we are again repeating this process this year by looking for a maximum of two Forum Members per Area to sit on both the Assessment and Interview Panels.

If you are interested in applying to take part on the assessment and interview panels please phone the CPPIH Area Manager. Your FSO can provide the contact details.

Why should the NHS and stakeholders take us seriously if they know we are going?

Until legislation changes, NHS Trusts still have a clear responsibility to consult with patients and the public on any significant changes to healthcare services or delivery.

The unique statutory powers of the Forums, their ever increasing media profile and your critical role in key NHS reports such as the Healthcare Commissions Annual Healthcheck, means that the NHS and other stakeholders must take the Forums seriously until they are abolished by law.

Many NHS Trusts are actively appreciating the work of the PPI Forums and we will continue to remind them of the responsibilities and legal powers of Forums.

What part will the CPPIH and Forums play in the transition process?

It is essential that the lessons learnt from the demise of the CHCs and the creation of PPI Forums are put into practice. We are currently in discussion with the Department of Health to ensure a smooth transition. We very much hope that PPI forums will want to work with us on this.

What support can we expect from the Commission?

The Commission will continue to support all PPI Forums until the Commission is abolished (currently expected to be summer 2007).

Communicating Your Views

How do we get our views heard by the Minister?

You can send your views through to ppimailbox@dh.gsi.gov.uk or write to the PPI Team, 692D, Skipton House, 80 London Road, London DE1 6LH, no later than 7th September 2006.

How will the Commission be communicating the views Forums of Forums back to decision makers?

We will be sending the Department of Health a National Summary of PPI Forum member views and comments that were given at the recent Area meetings.

We don't agree with the decision made, who can we communicate this to?

Again, you can send your views to the above contact details.

Will there be another opportunity to discuss the implications of this with other Forums?

Following on from the Area Forum meetings in July, there will also be an opportunity to discuss the PPI Strategic review with other members at Area meetings in September (details will follow shortly in the Forum Focus newsletter).

Can we share our views with the media and do we have to clear it with the Commission first?

It is likely that there will be reaction from the media to the Governments proposals. You can share your reactions to the new proposals with your local media and you do not have to discuss this with the Commission. Forums are independent of the Commission; however you do need to agree your comments with your Forum before you speak on behalf of the whole Forum. If you would like information or advice when dealing with the media then contact your Area Communications Lead via your CPPIH regional office.