

## Policy Briefing, July 2011

# GP Commissioning and local communities

### Changes to the NHS

General Practitioners, your family doctors at the clinic around the corner, are going to have more to do in the future in addition to seeing patients, writing prescriptions and making referrals. They are going to be in charge of healthcare budgets, which means that they will be able to plan and purchase services and healthcare solutions for their patients. This is one of the key changes to the health services introduced by the coalition Government's reform package [Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS](#). (These plans were modified as a result of a 'Listening Exercise' during spring 2011 – [read the results here](#).)

The argument for transferring the 'buying power' for health care to doctors is based on their closeness to patients that enables them to know local needs and devise solutions for the people they serve. For patients, this switch should not make much of a difference in terms of how they access health care. However, there should be significant changes to how patients and local people can get involved and influence local health provision.

### Involving local people

Public Patient Involvement (PPI) is the name traditionally used within the health service to describe how local people are involved in shaping health services. It often entails consultations with local people (in writing or sometimes through interviews, meetings or workshops) about how a service could be improved or established. It can also be more long-term, for example by establishing a citizens' panel or reference group to give ongoing input into a specific issue or service. These functions have been carried out primarily by primary care trusts until now, but in the future they will be led by GPs and will probably see a shift to more locally focused engagement work.

Wandsworth GP surgeries are grouped into three 'Localities' (see map) that together form a commissioning consortium for Wandsworth. It is likely that most GP surgeries will in the future have patient groups that meet regularly to give feedback on health services. How these patient groups will

be connected to the Locality level or to borough level decision making is currently being worked out by the Primary Care Trust, GPs and Wandsworth LINK and should be published during the autumn of 2011. If you would like to feed into this process, contact [Colin Smith](#) at the Primary Care Trust or [Sarah Ellison](#) at Wandsworth LINK.

To ensure that a wide range of people give feedback and make suggestions on how PPI should be approached under the new system, Wandsworth LINK and NHS Wandsworth have distributed a number of small grants to voluntary organisations to encourage participation by under represented groups. There has also been a conference bringing community partners, GPs and public bodies together. For updates from the NHS, you may wish to subscribe to the email updates that are circulated by the PPI team – click here to [contact Fareesa Abiden](#).

### People powered solutions?

Involving local people in shaping services makes an enormous amount of sense from the point of view of getting relevant information and 'market intelligence' about what is needed and wanted on the local level both in terms of services and how they are accessed. We believe that this



Wandsworth Borough divided into 'Localities'

is the only way to overcome health inequalities and also one of the best ways to create pathways to the right care solutions that work for people and therefore result in better health outcomes.

## Decision making structures

There is a new body in place at the borough level called the Health and Wellbeing Board. This board essentially brings all major decision makers together (see below and [our briefing for more details](#) and to find out who is a member).

Wandsworth GPs have formed a Clinical Commissioning Group that will make the bulk of commissioning decisions in the borough in the future. The meetings of this body will be public as far as we understand, but we have not yet figured out whom to speak to for updates and more information. We will publish any information received on [www.life-times.org.uk](http://www.life-times.org.uk)

In terms of representing local people and making sure patients and the wider community have a voice in decision making, [Wandsworth LINK](#) has a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

It is not yet clear how community groups and patients will feed intelligence and advice through to decision makers beyond the HealthWatch (LINK) representative. Lifetimes is pursuing this issue in collaboration with other local organisations – contact [policy@life-times.org.uk](mailto:policy@life-times.org.uk) if you want to help or get involved.

## Useful links and resources

Health and Wellbeing Executive Board papers  
[ww3.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=508&Year=2011](http://ww3.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=508&Year=2011)

Wandsworth LINK [www.wandsworthlink.org.uk/](http://www.wandsworthlink.org.uk/)

MAC Partnership Public Involvement Blog  
[www.publicinvolvement.org.uk/public-involvement-blog/](http://www.publicinvolvement.org.uk/public-involvement-blog/)



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