

RCN Policy Unit

Policy Briefing 18/2006

The Local Government White Paper Strong and prosperous communities

October 2006

Introduction

This briefing has a focus on *Health and Wellbeing* as a natural point of reference for members of the RCN.

However, there are other areas set out in Volume Two that will have an impact on the way the RCN engages with members, English Regional Boards, local government and policy makers in health. It is recommended that where RCN policy activity is considered that covers any of these areas, that the relevant section of Volume Two is considered.

The principles for change are set out in Volume One under the following chapters:

1. Strong and Prosperous Communities
2. Responsive services and empowered communities
3. Effective, accountable and responsive local government
4. Strong cities, strategic regions
5. Local government as a strategic leader and place shaper
6. A new performance framework
7. Efficiency- transforming local services
8. Community cohesion
9. Steps towards implementation

Volume Two set out how the proposals will apply to major local public service areas:

- A Community safety
- B Health and wellbeing
- C Vulnerable people
- D Children, young people and families
- E Economic development, housing and planning
- F Climate change
- G The third sector

Key principles of the White Paper

The Government's stated aim is to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. To achieve this, the Government will shift its 10 year approach to drive improvements in public service from the centre- "we must have the courage at the centre to let go."

The proposals will radically reduce national targets, and introduces a lighter tough inspection system where the Audit Commission acts as gatekeeper for proposed inspections.

There will be new duties for local government to work with other public service providers to meet local needs and drive up service standards.

Health and well-being

The Government stresses that this local government White Paper will enhance local leadership on health and well being and will make it easier for local authorities and NHS bodies to work together to tackle health inequalities and to deliver better services in their local area.

There are four key areas of focus:

- To ensure that all patients are able to voice their concerns on health and well being issues in their area
- To ensure there is more visible local leadership on health and wellbeing particularly on public health issues such as childhood obesity, smoking rates and health inequalities. The local authority lead member for adult social services will be able to influence the commissioning decisions of health and social care bodies, and drive action to reduce health inequalities. *Helen get RD to engage with ADSS and these lead members*
- To engender systematic partnership working between NHS bodies, local authorities and other partners. This might be through greater use of joint appointments, pooled budgets and joint commissioning. Health and social care services must be delivered seamlessly around the needs of patients, families and carers, and local partners able to work together in tackling the wider causes of social exclusion, worklessness and vulnerability. Note: the White Paper has a footnote setting out that the power to work together in this way was created in the Health Act 1999, but there is an admission that "in many areas, collaboration and partnership working is not as strong as it could be" *catalyst role for nurses as empowered local citizens? Use Regional Boards?*

- To ensure the priorities, reporting systems and performance management arrangements for public health and social care are joined up.

This White Paper will create a sustainable framework for local action for health and wellbeing. Partnership working will be strengthened and there will be greater clarity over who is responsible for agreeing and delivering local health and well being targets.

Responsive services and empowered communities- general

The drive will be for all councils to focus more on their citizens and communities.

People will to be given more control over their lives, they will be consulted and involved in running services, they will be informed about the quality of services in their area, and enabled to call agencies to account if services fail to meet their needs.

Councils will be encouraged to develop neighbourhood charters setting out local standards and priorities, to manage services at the level of the neighbourhood, to work more closely with neighbourhood policing teams, and to give local councillors small budgets to deal with local problems.

Government has set up a review to examine how communities can play a bigger part by managing or owing community assets. Government will continue to provide support for community groups to play a bigger role.

Government will create a stronger legal framework to require local authorities and other best value authorities to secure the participation of local citizens and communities.

Government will create *Community Call for Action* which will create standard procedures for dealing with petitions. When things go wrong, local councillors, supported by their communities, will be able to demand an answer to their questions through the Community Call for Action. The role of the Local Government Ombudsman will be updated for complaints.

Responsive services and empowered communities- health and well-being

Local authorities will be under a statutory duty to make arrangements for the establishment of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) – new bodies designed to involve local people in shaping the services and priorities of

health and social care bodies. LINKs will have the power to refer matters of concern to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be encouraged to look at the work of commissioners and providers of health and social care services.

There will be an extension to the range of powers open to citizens for making their voice heard on health and well-being issues.

Powers and responsibilities for local authorities:

- An expansion to Community Call for Action to cover all local government matters, including social care issues. Local councillors will be able to refer matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and this will complement the LINKs system
- Give a new range of powers to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including the right to require local service providers to provide evidence when requested, and for the OSC to recommend an independent inspection, if it feels the relevant service has failed to adequately address local concerns. Note- this will match powers that already exist in relation to PCTs.
- OSC will scrutinise the response of both local authorities and PCTs to the reports of Directors of Public Health on improving the health of local populations.
- A reformed best value duty to secure the participation of citizens in their activities. This will complement existing plans to strengthen s.11 Health and Social Care Act 2001 by expanding the duty on health bodies to “involve and consult” so that it includes the need to respond to patients and the public.
- New guidance will encourage local authorities PCTs and other relevant partner to co-ordinate their consultations and avoid multiple overlapping plans for the same neighbourhood.
- There will be an expectation that local authorities will work with third sector organisations in proactively consulting with vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

Effective, accountable and responsive local government

The framework within which local authorities operate can be a barrier to the kind of leadership that prosperous communities require- political parties may struggle to find good candidates for election, local councillors

may feel disempowered, council's leaders have short mandates, generally a year.

Changes will mean that all executive powers of local authorities will be vested in the leader of the council.

Leaders of council will come from one of three models: directly elected mayor (after consultation with local people) , directly elected executive of councillors, or a leader elected by fellow councillors with a clear four year mandate.

An independent review will consider incentives and barriers to serving on councils. New training opportunities will exist for councillors. The Code of Conduct will be amended to allow councillors to speak out on licensing and planning issues.

Byelaws will be fully devolved to local authorities and more effectively enforced with the use of fixed penalty notices.

Overview and scrutiny committees will be strengthened to allow them to call on local public service providers for evidence and to demand a response to reports from the council.

Effective, accountable and responsive local government- health and well-being

Local authority restructuring wherever possible will complement new PCT boundaries to provide a greater degree of co-terminosity.

Strong cities, strategic regions

The renaissance in many cities since 1997 puts them on a par with global cities, and much of this is down to the “dynamism of the private sector.” The Government will promote the concept of city development companies and encourage Employment and Skills board to be formed in core cities.

The Department for Communities, Treasury and DTI will jointly report for the Comprehensive Spending Review on how powers and resources can be devolved to regions and local authorities in cities. This will ensure clear accountability for decisions, stronger leadership, incentives to enable and support growth, reduce inequalities, and effective governance arrangements.

Local Government as a strategic leader and place shaper

Communities need strategic leadership to bring together local partners to improve the services we receive and shape the places where we live. This includes the development of vibrant town centres, to adapt to demographic changes, to assess and plan for the impact of climate change, and build cohesive communities.

There will be a new framework for strategic leadership in local areas, bringing together local partners to focus on the needs of citizens and communities.

The overarching strategic partnership for an area will be the Local Strategic Partnership. The Local Area Agreement will be the delivery plan for the strategy with a single set of priorities for local partners. This will include a single set of targets for improvement, tailored to local needs and agreed between Government and local partners.

There will be a new duty for local authorities and other local partners to work together with partners in the Local Area Agreement. Delivery of local priorities will be the responsibility of bodies such as children's trusts, and the new health and wellbeing partnerships.

Local Government as a strategic leader and place shaper- health and well-being

There will be further strengthening of partnership working between the planning and budgetary cycles between local government and health

- A new duty for the local authority and named partners to co-operate with each other in agreeing targets for the Local Area Agreement, and to have regard to those targets once agreed
- Formal arrangements for Directors of Public Health to be jointly appointed and held jointly accountable by the chief executives of local authorities and PCTs.
- Encourage wider use of joint appointments of senior managers between local authorities and NHS bodies.
- New legislation for a new statutory partnership for health and well-being under the LSP. There will be a new duty to co-operate for PCTs and local authorities to achieve an integrated approach to delivering local government and NHS priorities.

- DH will have a consultation on the effective implementation of these new partnerships. Responsibilities will include:
 - Agreement of shared outcomes
 - Common assessment framework
 - Single budgets (where appropriate)
 - Joint commissioning and planning
 - Delivery of joint LAA targets
 - Development monitoring evaluation and monitoring of reports of Directors of Public Health
 - Consistent approach to patient and public involvement
 - Support for high quality personalised provision (including capacity in the third sector)
- This winter, DH will publish guidance on commissioning for health and well-being. This will respond to the challenges set out in the Third Sector Task Force and will cover the need for a joint strategic needs assessment, undertaken by Directors of Public Health, Directors of Adult Social Services and Directors of Children's Services.
- Plans to move local authorities to a commissioning role

A new performance framework- general

The new role for local authorities as strategic leaders of their area means a new way of managing performance between local and central government and its partners.

There will be a radical simplification of the existing performance framework with around 35 priorities for each area. There will be a single set of about 200 outcome based indicators covering all national priorities like climate change, social exclusion and anti social behaviour. These indicators will include citizen satisfaction and perception measures. Citizens and communities will be able to examine performance against the indicators to know how well their local area is doing.

There will be a new regime for dealing with monitoring, support, assessment and intervention, building on the success of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This will be a more

proportionate risk based regime which will cut bureaucracy and allow more targeted support or intervention when things go wrong.

A new performance framework- health and well-being

From 2008, PCTs and local authorities will be expected to report on progress against strategic outcomes- including the seven outcomes for adult social care- in ways that enable local communities to understand and influence planning and commissioning decisions.

There will be a single performance framework:

- In the single set of around 200 national indicators, measures covering social care, public health, health protection, disease prevention and mental health subject to decisions in the CSR. In some cases, proxy indicators may be; required, for example, to assess effective commissioning practice
- Agree between Government and local partners through the LAA any improvement targets to contribute to national outcomes relating to health and well-being
- Introduce a risk based and proportionate independent external assessment system- covering risk, direction of travel, use of resources, and performance against indicators. CSCI approach to assessment of social care will be developed using the outcomes in the Health White Paper to provide the element of risk assessment relating to health and social care outcomes and services. The star ratings will not continue once this system is in place.
- Ensure inspection is only undertaken where triggered by annual risk assessment. Inspection of local authorities will be through the Audit Commission, inspection of health bodies will be through the new health and adult social care inspectorate
- Align the roles of SHAs and Government Offices with a new Memorandum of Understanding which will enable them to work more closely together in securing joint outcomes
- Establish a clear “ladder” of improvement, support and intervention, with proportionate, co-ordinated and effective actions to address failure.

- Care Services Improvement Partnership will be more closely aligned with the Regional Improvement Partnerships

Efficiency- transforming local services- general

Councils will have to challenge traditional methods of delivery, root out waste, keep all council activity under review and work with other public bodies to share assets, systems, data, skills and knowledge more effectively.

Ambitious efficiency gains will be required as part of the 2007 CSR.

The Government will encourage greater use of business process improvement techniques, and will encourage greater contestability through the use of fair and open competition.

The Government will provide 3 year funding settlements for local authorities which will provide greater stability and enable them to plan better.

Efficiency- transforming local services- health and well-being

CSIP has taken a preventative and proactive approach to working with local authorities in improving local services and supporting imaginative local implementation of national policy. It has developed a comprehensive improvement strategy for adult care services through a cross sector partnership across local government and the independent sector.

Government will encourage local authorities to a commissioning role, being open to using the best possible ways of securing the services' outcomes. New best value guidance will set out the key commissioning principles of this White Paper, Every Child Matters and the Health White Paper.

Community cohesion

The diverse population of Britain bring challenges in change and migration along with economic benefits. There are benefits that migration and diversity bring along with potential problems and risk to community cohesion. An enhanced role for community groups and greater resident participation in decisions can help all local areas to promote community cohesion.

The Government will encourage the Commission on Integration and Cohesion to produce more detailed plans on how to deliver a step change in promoting cohesion.