

News release

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New health champion gets Government backing

A new independent consumer champion is set to lead the way on campaigning for patient's rights in the city after being confirmed as part of a Government scheme to improve the amount of say local people have in health and social care services.

Leicester HealthWatch becomes one of the first of its kind in the country after the Government today gave its backing to the organisation's plans to put patients at the heart of local health and social care decision making.

The new organisation, which has been created by Leicester City Council and the Leicester Local Involvement Network (LINK) in partnership with the NHS, will be part of a nationwide network which aims to give people the power to influence local services. It will also provide help for people to complain when their experiences fall short of their expectations.

Under the proposals, Leicester LINK, which already represents the views of people in the city, will expand and transform into HealthWatch.

Councillor Manjula Sood, Leicester City Council's cabinet lead for health, said: "I am really pleased that Leicester LINK has been given the opportunity to be part of these exciting plans which will put patients at the heart of decision making about their health and social care services and help address health inequalities.

"Leicester is such an exciting, vibrant and diverse city and it is important that we use this opportunity to build an effective consumer champion that can stand up for the rights and needs of our local communities, ensuring they all get a fair deal and holding to account the decision makers where it is right to do so."

Hasmukh Jobanputra, chair of the Leicestershire LINK, said: "We are delighted to have been granted HealthWatch pathfinder status. It's an important achievement and being a part of the programme gives us a chance to design a service which is tailored to our local communities and truly meets their needs.

"It also presents us with the chance to work with our friends and colleagues across Leicestershire to ensure and even stronger sense of community collaboration."

Developing HealthWatch is part of the ongoing NHS reforms in England set out in the Health and Social Care Bill. It follows the Secretary of State for Health's pledge to give patients a greater voice in the way the NHS is run by creating a health system that is "clinically-led, patient driven".

Leicester HealthWatch has been formed after the City Council and LINK bid jointly for 'pathfinder status'. As a pathfinder both organisations will jointly develop the new HealthWatch, test the benefits of new ways of working as soon as possible, and help other communities learn from our experience, as HealthWatch is rolled out across the country.

For more information on Leicester LINK, please visit: <http://www.leicesterlink.org.uk>.

Ends

For more information please contact media officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 4123 or liz.thomas@leicester.nhs.uk

Notes to editor:

NHS Leicester City is the operating name for Leicester Primary Care Trust.

NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland is the operating name for Leicestershire County and Rutland Primary Care Trust (PCT).