

A POSSIBLE MODEL FOR POWERS AND PEOPLE FOR LINKs
(a discussion model accepted by the CWPNT PPI Forum on 1 May 2007)

1 POWERS OF LINKs

Starting with the premise that the purpose of LINKs is to provide independent user feedback to improve health and social care services, key points are that :

- a) LINKs will have powers to **require answers**, to **require entry** and to **refer issues** to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for the complete cycle of **commissioning and providing** for both **health and social care** ;
- b) for an **appeal loop** when conflicts of interest occur at the OSC level, there is no impediment in the Bill to passing concerns and evidence to an **appropriate regulator** (Strategic Health Authority, Health Care Commission, Social Care Inspectorate) ;
- c) for **specialist services** covering two or more LINKs, there is no impediment in the Bill to a **Specialist Joint Committee** with full delegated powers and which is accountable to the LINKs delegating the powers.

2 PEOPLE IN THE NETWORK

The simplest realistic model is to start with members of existing groups and the public who have a particular interest in health and social care, hence :

- a) invite these members to **register** to form the **membership level** of the LINK with voting powers to elect some or all of the LINK Stewardship Board (the "**Board**") which forms the **overview level** of the LINK ;
- b) it is unrealistic to give statutory powers to thousands of people per LINK, so **give these powers initially just to the "Board"** ;
- c) however, most of the work would be done by "**care watch groups**" chosen and empowered by members of the "Board" to form the **intermediate working group level** of the LINK
(many current Forum members may wish to serve on these groups).

3 PEOPLE FOR THE LINK "BOARD"

Key logic choices involve credibility, effectiveness and balance in that :

- a) to be a **credible independent watchdog**, there needs to be an **all volunteer "Board"** who are committed to work in a consensus non-partisan culture ;
- b) to be **effective**, the LINK "Board" should not exceed say **15 members** who would need appropriate experience and training ;
- c) there needs to be a **balance between inclusivity and complexity**, hence there is a range of possible options for the constituencies for the "Board"
 - geographical - simple but poor inclusivity
 - functional - inclusive, but complex / contentious
 - both - a **workable balance** decided locally (eg 9 : 6)
 - ideally using **elections in geographical constituencies** by registered LINK members to demonstrate democratic accountability, but using **nominations in functional constituencies** from relevant groups in order to ensure specialist experience.