



the care forum

Information Sheet

April 2011

Getting your voice heard

The Health and Social Care Bill progressing through Parliament gives voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSES) organisations the opportunity to have their say at the same time as the NHS undergoes significant restructuring.

According to Regional Voices in its guide "GP consortia and the transition period" which gives a summary of the current situation and the timescales for change, "the aim behind these changes is to ensure clinical decisions lie at the heart of the commissioning process and to place decision making as close to the patient as possible."

The Health and Social Care Bill has received its second reading and progressed to committee stage where a detailed examination of the bill has taken place.

The Health and Social Care Bill Committee has taken evidence from experts and interest groups including a number of national voluntary sector organisations for example Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), Mind, Parkinson's UK, Cancer Research UK, Target Ovarian Cancer and Rethink.

Committee stage ends on 31 March and is followed by report stage in the House of Commons which provides a chance for the whole House to discuss and amend the bill. This stage is likely to begin after the Easter recess.

Report stage gives VCSES organisations an opportunity to lobby their local MPs to table amendments which can then be debated and voted on before the third reading of the bill in the House of Commons. After the third reading the bill will progress through the House of Lords.

The following timescales for change will help organisations to consider how the Health and Social Care Bill will translate in practice over the next two years:

Nov/Dec 2010 Initial cohort of pathfinder GP consortia are announced.

Jan/Feb 2011 Next wave of GP consortia are announced (over 50% of population covered).

March 2011 Third wave of GP consortia are announced.

April 2011 Emerging consortia begin to take on delegated authority. NHS Commissioning Board sets up in shadow form. Half of local authorities are involved in Health and Wellbeing Board early implementers. Early HealthWatch "pathfinders" are announced.

June 2011 Clustering of PCTs is completed.

Autumn 2011 HealthWatch England is established in shadow form.

April 2012 NHS National Commissioning Board is formally established. Local HealthWatch are fully established. GP consortia can be authorised to take on as much delegated authority as possible although overall accountability will still rest with the PCTs. Strategic health authorities (SHAs) are closed. Health and Wellbeing Boards are established in shadow form.

April 2013 GP consortia take full control of budgets with one year of supported peer work. PCTs are abolished. Health and Wellbeing Boards are formally established. Local authorities start commissioning advocacy, either through local HealthWatch or from other sources.

This timeline has been drawn up by Regional Voices' which is working with the SHA to ensure that the voluntary and community

For this newsletter in other formats ☎ 0117 965 4444

sector is included in all developments and that the sector locally works with consortia as they emerge. Regional Voices' website describes how to get your voice heard through this route.

Another avenue to voice opinion locally is via the health and social care scrutiny commissions. Local authority websites will have more details of when they meet and their programmes of work.

This month's 'In Contact' will outline how the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Boards will provide increasingly important routes for the VCSES and the communities they serve to highlight gaps, needs and where improvements could be made. In a later publication The Care Forum will outline the role for individuals and the VCSES in the LINKs and emerging HealthWatch arrangements.

In the meantime many opportunities exist to get involved with parliament beyond the passage of a bill. Naomi Kent, Parliamentary Outreach Officer says: "If you want to have your voice heard and would like to get involved with parliament you may be surprised by how many ways you can do this." Her five top tips for getting involved are:

- **Select committees** work in the House of Commons and House of Lords. Anyone can submit relevant information to a committee in response to a call for evidence. Find out more at www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select
- **Parliamentary questions** are tools that can be used by MPs to seek information or to press for action from the government. If you want the government to provide information on an issue, or to take action, you can suggest that your MP tables a question. Find out more at www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/questions/
- **All Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)** are informal cross-party groups with memberships drawn from both Houses, but they are not officially part of the work of parliament. APPGs have been formed on a

wide range of issues. Find out more at www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg/

- **Adjournment debates** allow a debate to be held without requiring the House to vote on a motion. There are different types of adjournment debate. They are a good way of raising awareness of an issue amongst MPs, lords and the media. You can work with your MP on applying for a backbench adjournment debate to highlight an issue and to obtain a response from government. Find out more at www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/adjournment/
- **Early Day Motions** are formal motions theoretically submitted for debate in the House of Commons. Very few EDMs are actually debated, but they are printed and may be signed by backbench MPs who support the issue. You can work with your MP on submitting an EDM and raising support for it from other MPs. Find out more at www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/edms/

Further information:

"Get Involved - 5 top tips for working with Parliament" is available from Naomi Kent, Parliamentary Outreach Officer for South West England.

Naomi can provide a variety of free workshops and talks which explore how parliament works, how laws are made, what select committees do and most importantly how you can get your voice heard in these processes. These can usually be provided wherever and whenever is most convenient for you. If you are interested contact Naomi Kent, ☎ 07917 488 148, kentn@parliament.uk

Regional Voices website has information on the latest developments in health and social care at www.regionalvoices.net/stronger-connections-for-better-health

For information about the Health and Social Care Bill's passage through parliament visit: www.services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/healthandsocialcare.html

The Care Forum, The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

☎0117 965 4444 Fax: 0117 965 0200 www.thecareforum.org

Registered charity No.1053817 Co. limited by guarantee No.3170666

© **Researched, designed and published by The Care Forum**

