



<b>ITEM REF NUMBER:</b>	<b>19/ 2008</b>	<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>10 December 2008</b>
<b>ITEM TITLE:</b>	<b>Resident Involvement in Thematic Partnerships</b>		
<b>REPORT AUTHORS:</b>	Steve Tennison		

### **1. Summary**

This report follows the discussion at the 10 July 2008 Board meeting, at which it was suggested that the Chairs of the thematic partnerships should consider the scope for including former resident members of the Southwark Alliance Board on their boards.

It summarises discussions held with the thematic partnership lead officers on this matter. While the importance of community involvement in public services and local decision-making is recognised - particularly in the context of the 'Duty to Involve' under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 - it was considered that there are more appropriate ways of achieving this than by placing former resident members on thematic partnership boards. However, it will be important to ensure that there are effective organisms for involving local people in the work of the Southwark Alliance Board and the thematic partnerships. The Board is recommended to keep local community involvement arrangements under review

### **2. Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:

- 2.1 note the emphasis placed by the Government on involving 'representatives of local people' in public services.
- 2.2 ask thematic partnerships to ensure that they have effective mechanisms for engaging the community.
- 2.3 keep community involvement arrangements under review.
- 2.4 agree not to seek to place former resident members of the Southwark Alliance on thematic partnerships.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 When the Southwark Alliance Board was restructured in July 2008, a number of former resident and voluntary and community sector members of the Board expressed concern that there would no longer be resident representatives on the partnership.
- 3.2 In the course of the discussion, it was suggested that the Chairs of the thematic partnerships should consider the scope for including residents on their boards.
- 3.3 This matter was discussed at the Partnership Lead Officers' meeting of 24 July 2008, and again on 25 November. Following the first meeting, a survey was undertaken of voluntary and community sector representation on thematic partnerships and their respective engagement structures. As might be expected, given the diverse range of interests and services concerned, thematic partnership board membership and involvement arrangements vary according to the specific circumstances of each partnership.
- 3.4 At the Partnership Lead Officers meeting, the following points were made:
- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Comprehensive Area Assessment both place considerable emphasis on the involvement of local residents and other interested parties in public services, and that it is important to keep local arrangements under review. (NB The Duty to Involve under the 2007 Act is focused on term, 'representatives of local persons', which is defined as: 'those who work or study of the area, including those who work for the authority; visitors; service users; local third sector group; businesses; bodies such as parish council; and anyone else likely to be affected by, or interested in, the function. The Duty covers children and young people, as well as adults.)
  - The former resident members were selected *as a group* to provide a 'reality check' within the Southwark Alliance Board. As individuals, they were not - nor ever intended to be - representative of, or accountable, to the wider community.
  - There is a wide range of public engagement mechanisms currently in use by thematic partnerships and individual agencies. It was generally considered that these provide a more appropriate mechanism for engaging with the public than placing an individual resident on a partnership board.
  - There are a number of voluntary and community sector representatives on thematic partnership boards. In some instances, these represent particular groups within the voluntary and community sector, while, in others, they are front-line service providers bringing specialist expertise to the partnership.
  - It is important that thematic partnerships maintain effective links with voluntary and community sector groups most relevant to their areas of operation. However, it was considered that a 'one size fits all' approach to voluntary and community sector would not be helpful.
- 3.5 Ultimately, it was felt that the original rationale for placing resident members on the Southwark Alliance Board had passed, and that it was not appropriate to place former resident members on thematic partnership boards.