

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Bulletin issue 2 – April 2007

Local Involvement Networks Bulletin

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Gateway reference 8207

About this bulletin

This bulletin is of particular interest to:

- NHS staff working on Patient & Public Involvement programmes;
- Local Government staff working on user involvement programmes and the procurement of LINKs;
- Local authority health and social care overview and scrutiny committee members and support staff
- Voluntary and community sector organisations which are interested in providing a 'host' service to the new LINKs or becoming a member of a LINK, including those that provide forum support services;
- Current PPI Patients' Forum members; and
- Health and social care regulatory bodies with PPI interests.

We would ask that you forward the bulletin to all members of your team who may benefit from this information. You may wish to print and display this bulletin on all relevant notice boards or arrange to have it published on your internal intranet sites.

Website links

If you are reading a printed copy of the bulletin, you may not be aware that further information is available on most items. The DH website is currently under construction to update the information you may be seeking. You can still access the online version of the bulletin but further information and links are being updated. The site currently being worked on is:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/PatientAndPublicInvolvement/fs/en>.

Feedback

We welcome your ideas and comments that will shape the format and content of this bulletin in the future. The next edition will be published in May 2007. Please e-mail ppimailbox@dh.qsi.gov.uk or write to the PPI Policy Team, Room 502A, Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH.

Introduction

Welcome to the April edition of the LINKs bulletin. This edition is focusing on the progress of the LINK Early Adopter sites.

TOP STORY

Early Adopter Projects

Nine early adopter projects (EAPs) have been set up around the country to support and inform the development of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), in particular, the EAPs will help ensure that the learning and experience of the current system is not lost. Seven of these projects are being run by the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) and are located in:

- County Durham
- Doncaster
- Manchester
- Hertfordshire
- Kensington & Chelsea
- Medway
- Dorset

In addition, the Healthcare Commission has two existing projects in Leeds/Bradford and Plymouth/Cornwall which are being managed as EAPs as part of the LINKs project.

The sites for these projects have been carefully selected to represent a geographic spread across England and contain collectively, inner urban, urban and rural communities, contrasts between wealth and deprivation, ethnically diverse and relatively homogenous populations and so on.

The purpose of the EAPs is to work with a wide range of local stakeholders to interrogate the LINKs idea by exploring and testing the characteristics of LINK activities and relationships and then applying this learning to the new PPI process so that, assuming parliamentary approval, LINKs can hit the ground running. They also aim to test the LINKs concept and add operational detail to the policy framework, to provide LINKs and those organisations responsible for establishing, supporting or working alongside them with information, advice and guidance on how to maximise the effectiveness of LINKs and relationships with them.

Regional Early Adopter Projects (EAPs) Updates

The following are summaries of activity from the EAP sites, provided by the project managers.

Hertfordshire

The first meeting of the Project Group was held on 7th March 2007. There were representatives from the local authority overview and scrutiny committee and adult social care, three Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) forum members, Forum Support Organisations (FSO), Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations including POHWER, Carers in Hertfordshire and Viewpoint, and three NHS Trusts.

The group has established three sub-groups looking at:

- how the LINK would work at a commissioning level,
- the Department of Health draft model contract specification, and
- reviewing the LINK's relationship with overview and scrutiny.

The group is planning a stakeholder event for late September. Short leaflets/flyers about LINKs are to be distributed at consultation meetings, both large public meetings and at other meetings with small local groups.

The EAP is continually seeking to map involvement activity locally, with members of the Project Group providing further information on networks and groups. The EAP is using a local Councils of Voluntary Service newsletter to promote the concept of LINKs to ensure maximum engagement with community groups and stakeholders.

The EAP is also particularly focusing on how the LINK will consider mental health services. A joint Herts Partnership Trust meeting will be held in late April following the election of governors to the Foundation Trust, and will focus on the work of LINKs and on building a partnership between the Foundation Trust and the Herts LINK. It is also intended to hold further workshop events with stakeholder groups to look at how mental health service users can feed their views into the LINK, and influence commissioning of services.

EAP Contact: Bernie Beckett, CPPIH Area Director for East Region
Bernadette.Beckett@cpii.org

Manchester

A forum member event was held on 12th March, which gave members of local forums the opportunity to discuss the development of LINKs and their involvement in the process, and to talk through any member concerns over the proposals.

The initial stakeholder event was held on March 19th with 150 delegates in attendance. The event consisted of an information sharing session given by members of the project group followed by workshop sessions looking at particular aspects of LINK development within Manchester.

An exercise to map involvement activity locally continues. The work is producing information on the shape and membership of existing networks and is also identifying gaps in the network coverage.

A meeting to discuss the content of the Department of Health draft model contract specification has taken place. Contact continues to be made with local voluntary groups through existing networks to inform them of the project and to discuss with them the opportunities for involvement in the project. Plans for testing opportunities for wider public engagement are also being developed in readiness for discussion by the project group.

EAP Contact: Paul Siddall, CPPIH Area Director for West Region
Paul.Siddall@cpii.org

Kensington & Chelsea

The Kensington & Chelsea Early Adopter Project is making good progress. A sub-group meeting focusing on relationships between social care, the overview and scrutiny committee and the LINK has taken place.

An exercise to map involvement activity locally continues and meetings have been held with a variety of community groups within Kensington and Chelsea. Interesting themes are emerging around the following points:

- Engaging with individuals – wanting assurance that the LINK will not ignore or pay lip services to their issues

- What assurances are there that issues seen as key to local communities will be picked up?
- There needs to be service user representation without tokenism
- How will the LINK deal with unpopular issues or issues not high on health agenda, such as dentistry services for substance users.
- How will the LINK reach out effectively to local communities.

EAP Contact: Jessie Cunnett, CPPIH Area Director for South Region
Jessie.Cunnett@cppih.org

Dorset

The steering group met for the third time on 28th March, where working principles have been agreed. A short-life subgroup met on 14th March to discuss the Department of Health model contract specification.

The Sub-Group to consider events met on March 22nd primarily to discuss planning to raise awareness of the development of the LINK. After this meeting, the group decided to go back to the steering group for more guidance as to what needs to happen – and how best to engage the community regarding the project. The issue was discussed at the March 28th meeting, a further meeting of the events sub-group was planned for mid April, to take the agreed actions forward. An engagement strategy will be produced, along with a clear and simple set of questions and principles that will be taken out to consultation with the community. A range of methods including an event and the use of the citizens panel will be used, aimed at reaching a broad cross-section of the community.

More detailed information is being gathered about events that have already been held in other EAP areas - and shared with the sub-group members.

EAP Contact: Jessie Cunnett, CPPIH Area Director for South Region
Jessie.Cunnett@cppih.org

Medway

Progress on the planned event in Medway is underway. The event will aim to attract as many stakeholders as possible. The sub-group presented a written brief to the main steering group at their meeting on April 12th for sign off. Following the event there was also a proposal to hold an Away Day for the Project Group to establish a plan for the testing and evaluation phase of the project.

A mapping exercise of target groups and the media, is currently available to help with dissemination of messages to stakeholders.

EAP Contact: Jessie Cunnett, CPPIH Area Director for South Region
Jessie.Cunnett@cppih.org

Co. Durham

A community conference to discuss the development of the LINK in Durham took place on 2 March with 126 attendees. This evaluated well and has generated a great deal of useful information for the next phase of the work. The report is attached as an annex to this bulletin.

Meetings will take place from April through to June, using questions based on the main themes that came out of the 2nd March event. Some thematic meetings – with

the Learning Disability Parliament, Disability Outlook, SURF (mental health service users) are already arranged. Others will be done with support from County Council staff.

A joint process for scoping engagement and involvement structures at county, district and neighbourhood level has been agreed with the primary care trust and County Council Community Development staff.

A meeting took place with the FSO development staff supporting the forum members who live in County Durham, to discuss progress to date and the next steps. The meeting focused particularly around engagement structures forums are currently involved with and work the forums might undertake in a LINKs like way.

Another meeting which has taken place was held with North East Ambulance forum where its concerns about LINKs were recorded and passed on along with its proposal to set up an independent organisation.

EAP Contact: Sally Young, CPPIH Area Director for North Region
Sally.Young@cppih.org

Doncaster

A report on the LINK arrangements has been drafted for presentation at the Healthier Communities and Vulnerable People and Children and Young People overview and scrutiny committees. However, due to the forthcoming council elections this will not now be presented until June. In the meantime information will be presented to the Council's Senior Management Team and the Executive Board and the elected Mayor will be advised via these mechanisms.

Work is currently taking place to ensure that information on the LINK arrangements is included on the agenda for forthcoming strategic meetings within the Doncaster strategic partnership structure. These meetings are likely to take place in May. Further meetings will take place with council officers to ensure that LINK is incorporated into the draft of the Community Engagement Strategy and the Doncaster Compact.

One particular meeting will be arranged with council Area Managers to explore how the LINK can operate on a Neighbourhood Management level and how it will enable groups, residents and individuals to contribute to area plans and identify local priorities. Equality and diversity are also issues which need to be incorporated into the LINK arrangements and will be discussed separately. A strategy for involving Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups has been agreed with Doncaster CVS, which will include a presentation to the BME Health Improvement Group.

Meetings have been arranged with a range of voluntary and community sector groups, including Disability Cluster and Doncaster Women's Centre, to cascade information about the LINK and to identify existing arrangements for participation and involvement.

The local authority LINK lead has undertaken a presentation on the LINK proposals to the Neighbourhoods, Communities and Children's Services Senior Management Team. A number of concerns were raised including financial arrangements for the LINK, the right to observe, and the interpretation of the duty to respond. Clarity on the relationship between the LINK and Overview and Scrutiny was also discussed. The

local authority LINK lead has begun the process of preparing for the procurement of the host organisation for the LINK and has clarified the procurement process.

The CPPIH Area Director held a LINKs briefing for voluntary sector organisations in Doncaster. This provided an opportunity for them to find out more about the Early Adopter Project, LINKs generally and what this could mean for the voluntary and community sector. Follow-up meetings will be held with individual voluntary organisations about their potential involvement and views on engagement

EAP Contact: Sally Young, CPPIH Area Director for North Region
Sally.Young@cppih.org

Healthcare Commission Test Sites – Reflections and Learning for Early Adopter Projects

Background

A paper was prepared by the Healthcare Commission EAP Project Manager in order to identify key learning points from the Healthcare Commission's Test Site project¹ that could inform the whole EAP programme as it is rolled out.

Since October 2005, the Healthcare Commission (HC) has been exploring ways in which local people can become more involved in its work as a regulator of healthcare organisations.

The first year focused primarily on the scoping of local patient and public engagement activities, mapping and identifying potential partner organisations and raising awareness of the HC and its activities. Most of this work was undertaken through the regional teams and two dedicated Community Engagement Officers who have spent some considerable time building relationships with local patient groups, voluntary and community organisations and other public agencies that may want to contribute to the work.

The initiative was set up in recognition of the need for the Healthcare Commission to put patients and the public at the heart of its work. Its primary purpose being to explore ways in which the experiences of local people can be captured and fed into Healthcare Commission assessment processes more coherently.

Through a series of participative events, local (community-generated) principles for good engagement were developed and these have been subsequently translated into local test site strategies.

These strategies put in place arrangements for developing Local Participation Networks (LPNs) that build on existing local activities and seek to reach out to those communities that are most vulnerable and least heard.

¹ That have been developed since October 2005 and based in two sites - Plymouth and Leeds/Bradford, subsequently becoming part of the EAPs programme

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES THAT HAVE EMERGED TO DATE AND THE LEARNING POINTS FOR THE EARLY ADOPTER PROJECTS AND LINKS

1. Clarity of Purpose

“What are we here to do again?”

Learning Point

- Establish a mechanism, at the earliest possible opportunity, to enable stakeholders to develop a *shared understanding* of purpose, objectives and milestones
- An incremental or phased approach may avoid over-committing

2. Capacity and Resources

“Nobody told me we’d need that much!”

Learning Point

- Plan early for “effective” resource allocation, so that this can be dovetailed into existing, traditional budget planning processes that may be being used within stakeholder organisations such as local authorities

3. Defining the Concepts

“I didn’t realise that’s what you meant when you talked about community development”

Learning Point

- Define all concepts early
- Develop a shared understanding of expectations and what is required around these, in order to avoid future misunderstanding or confusion

4. Effective Change Management & Culture Change

“This project may be about patient and public engagement but in reality this is about changing the way we do things round here...culture change!”

Learning Point

- Build into project planning, mechanisms that will help to identify any changes in behaviour, systems and processes required to create an environment that will support EAP/LINK roles and responsibilities

5. Roles and Responsibilities

“When did we agree I’d do that? Isn’t that something you’re leading on?”

“How can I get that done? Who do I need to get agreement for that?”

Learning Point

- Clarify roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements as early as possible

6. Project Planning and Critical Success Factors

“Are we trying to do too much too quickly here? Perhaps we should be a bit more realistic...”

“This project just keeps growing and growing it’s out of control!”

Learning Point

- Balance focused, robust project planning on the one hand with the need for some flexibility when working with diverse local communities

7. Ownership and Buy-in

“What’s in it for me...not worth it unless I can see I’m making a real difference?”

“The reason this project has struggled at times is because there hasn’t really been enough real buy-in and support from your most senior managers”

Learning Point

- Early focus on achieving “buy-in” from *all* stakeholders is critical. This may require brokering deals and raising awareness in variety of different ways and will inevitably take longer than originally anticipated

Healthcare Commission contact

Lorraine Denoris
Lead - Patient and Public Engagement
EAP Project Manager
Healthcare Commission
Finsbury Tower
103-105 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8TG

E: Lorraine.Denoris@healthcarecommission.org.uk

T: 020 7 448 9479

www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

EAP Evaluation Process

The NHS Centre for Involvement (NCI) is leading the EAP evaluation. Its approach to capturing the lessons from the EAPS draws on '*Theories of Change*' and combines qualitative and quantitative views. Integrating an action research and consensus building this approach will enable the evaluation team to understand the expectations and experiences from diverse stakeholders in each site.

The team will also document examples of approaches and activities that are productive and identify barriers to the successful growth and impact of the EAPs. The findings will form the basis of a report and will underpin the Centre's approach to supporting and developing the capacity of LINKs in to the future.

NCI contact

Ian Brittain
Director of Communications
NHS Centre for Involvement
7 Vanguard Centre
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL

E: ian.brittain@warwick.ac.uk
T: 024 7615 0339

www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk

News in brief

Health Select Committee investigation into PPI

The Health Select Committee published its Third Report of Session 2006-07 on Patient and Public Involvement in the NHS (HC 278-I) on Friday 20th April. The report looks at a number of issues relevant to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, which is currently awaiting its report stage in the House of Commons. The report deals both with major consultations and the operations of LINKs.

The report concludes that patient and public involvement (PPI) has a key role to play in bringing about service improvement and improving public confidence in the NHS and social care. It also acknowledges that many NHS bodies and social care commissioners have conducted PPI effectively.

The Government expects to provide a full response to this report over the next couple of months.

Transcripts of the proceedings from this investigation and a copy of the final report is available on the Parliamentary website at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/health_committee.cfm

Draft Model Contract Specification

We are currently working on the production of a model contract specification for local authorities to use when procuring the host organisation to support a LINK. The specification will be in two parts. Firstly, the specification will set out some basic requirements of what the Department of Health expects from both a LINK and its host organisation. The specification is a starting point for the contract with a host organisation and the subsequent development of a LINK and is not intended to describe a final fixed point. -Local authorities will need to ensure that it is applied to their style of commissioning and integrate it with any existing standard documentation.

The Department of Health will produce more detailed guidance for LINKs and host organisations once the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill receives Royal Assent. This guidance will set out, for example possible LINK governance structures and arrangements for carrying out engagement activities.

Secondly, the draft tender requirements set out some of the requirements that local authorities can use to advertise for a host organisation. They are a starting point for the tendering of a host and again are not set in stone. Commissioners may wish to integrate the content of a draft document with any existing, local standard documentation.

We are working with a number of stakeholders on this document and have sought views from many of those responding to the *A stronger local voice* document published last year on what should be included as well as seeking specific comments from key organisations such as the CPPIH, Local Government Association, Centre for Public Scrutiny, National Council for Voluntary Organisations. We have also had comments from those involved in the early adopter sites around the country, including local authorities, forum members, VCS organisations, Forum Support Organisations and have held specific workshop sessions to discuss the specification.

We hope to publish the finalised specification by the summer.

LINKs regional events

The Department of Health and the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health have been receiving a number of calls and e-mails from PPI Forum members who have expressed their concerns that they are not able to gain a place at one of the regional events being arranged to inform the development of LINKs.

The London event held in December last year was extremely popular and there were far more expressions of interest than we were able to satisfy. We were clear on the day that we should try and ensure that those who were not given a place then should have other opportunities to attend any subsequent events. For this reason we are not offering places to those who attended the London event. We are very keen for as wide a range of people to have the opportunity to inform the development of LINKs.

The regional events, like the London event, are designed to bring together all those stakeholders who will be essential to the success of LINKs. As we have made clear from the outset we believe that forum members are of fundamental importance to these events, although this has to be balanced with other key stakeholders, including those from local authorities, NHS and social care organisations, the voluntary and community sector and others already participating in wider user involvement.

Each regional event will have space for a maximum of 60 delegates. To ensure a good balance and fair mix of stakeholders attending each of the nine regional events, we have asked that representation of each stakeholder group is as follows:

Local NHS PPI Leads = 8

Local Authority user involvement and procurement leads = 10

Local voluntary and community sector representation = 8

PPI Forum Chairs/elected members = 10

Regional Healthcare Commission & Commission for Social Care Inspection reps = 3

Complaints Managers = 2

Regional Overview and Scrutiny Committee representatives = 5

Local involvement network Early Adopter Project representatives = 5

Service User and Carer Regional Network representatives = 9

The events are primarily workshops which will aim to gather practical ways forward from the wide range of stakeholder groups and individuals attending. As with the national event, we shall produce a write-up of each event and which will be made available on the Department's web site. Headline outputs will also be featured in the Department's monthly LINK newsletter.

LGA Conference Update

On 26 March the Local Government Association held a conference on 'LINKs: engaging communities in health and social care decision-making'. The event was well attended and the programme designed to incorporate a range of relevant issues. The conference included presentations on: LINKs and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill; LINKs and the local delivery landscape; LINKs and the voluntary and community sector; the transition from patient forums to LINKs; the relationship between LINKs and the Local NHS; and implications for overview and scrutiny. A series of workshops also examined issues around consulting with communities and 'hard to reach groups'.

Feedback from the event shows there is a significant level of interest in LINKs and a desire among colleagues from many sectors to learn more. The presentations from speakers at the conference on 26th March are available on the LGA's website at:

www.lga.gov.uk

Please click on Events and Meetings (left menu) and then Conference Presentations (right menu).

Future of CPPIH and its activities

In order to provide as much clarity as possible, the Department has asked the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health to base its plans for the closure of the Commission and of patients forums on a November 2007 Royal Assent date. Royal Assent is the final stage of the passage of legislation through Parliament. A Bill which has been given Royal Assent becomes an Act of Parliament and is then law.

Working to this timescale (still subject to parliamentary processes) means that:

- * patients forums will end by 31 March 2008
- * the Commission will finish operationally by 31 March 2008
- * April 2008 onwards will see the establishment and development of LINKs.