

Local Involvement Networks

# Bulletin



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## About this bulletin

### Welcome to the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Bulletin

This bulletin has been developed to help keep you up to date with the latest developments for LINKs. It is produced by the NHS Centre for Involvement on behalf of the Department of Health.

This publication will be of particular interest to:

- LINK participants;
- voluntary and community sector organisations;
- Host organisations who are supporting LINKs;
- health and social care professionals;
- local government staff working on user involvement and the setting up of LINKs;
- members of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and
- health and social care regulators.

Please feel free to circulate this bulletin to colleagues, display it on relevant notice boards or publish it on your internal intranet sites.

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# Voice piece

**Improving user involvement through LINKs**, Lynne Robertson, Deputy Chief Officer and Community Engagement Manager for Devon LINK, explains how the network is reaching out to some of the most marginalised communities

We started activity on our LINK by working with the Local Authority to raise awareness of what the networks were all about. We already knew how to get to some groups, many of which were very well coordinated, so we decided to concentrate our efforts on targeting the hard-to-reach communities outside the system. Once we began identifying these, we realised just how many of them there were and we had to start making choices. So we ended up with the very, very hard to reach. These included gypsy travellers, migrant workers and people with learning disabilities. These are people who are not easily available to us for face-to-face consultation and we knew we needed to talk to their representatives. Our community workers used some of the contacts they already had to begin the process and found new contacts by using the Devon CVS networks and the internet.

Formality is a major barrier in accessing many of the traditionally hard to reach communities. Some of them do not form coherent groups and most would not attend a meeting set up to talk about the local LINK – you have to go out to them. One of our workers recently went to a gypsy traveller fair in Somerset that was arranged by Equality South West. It was held in a gazebo in the middle of a field where people talked about their issues from a hay bale! The meeting had its own agenda, so it was not easy to use it to promote the LINK. Nevertheless, by talking to a gypsy traveller development

worker, it was still a good way to learn something about the many issues of this group of people and to create stronger contacts with them for the future.

Meetings around a table will only work for some people – you have to find the right approach for every different group, respecting their timescales and working with them in a creative way.

Another example of how we have targeted minority groups is our work with people with learning disabilities. We created a general presentation about the LINK, which we trawled all around Devon, but we realised that it wasn't an appropriate tool to engage everyone. For those people with learning disabilities, for example, it was far too long-winded. So one of our community workers went to Devon People First, a user led support organisation for people with a learning disability, and asked them for tips and feedback on it. The result was a new, simplified, presentation with pictures and symbols which can be used with similar groups in the future.

I think it's important to realise that initially the LINK may not mean much to many people. It's vital to think carefully about the group you are targeting and then find out how the new network can be made relevant to them. If you don't, they quickly lose interest.

As the LINK starts to address issues, there will be solid examples to put forward of where it has made improvements in the design and delivery of health and social care. That's what people want to hear about. It is important to note that you don't have to consult with all the people, all the time, on every issue. Targeted involvement is the most effective way of getting qualitative, meaningful views on particular issues that arise and avoids the bombardment of certain sections of the community that exists at present.

## News in brief

### LINKs identity published

The project to develop a visual identity that LINKs can use to support local communications has been launched on the LINKs exchange.

The items made available to LINKs include:

- **Identity guide** with practical suggestions for LINKs on how to get more people involved, ideas on how to get messages across and guidance of how to use the new logo.
- **Logo files** in formats that can be used by both PC users and professional designers.
- **Templates** in a variety of formats – a Word template and artwork files for identity cards, as well as posters to support recruitment.

Based on research with the public, the materials are designed to help local LINKs produce materials that make an impact and get their message across.

For further information visit [www.lx.nhs.uk](http://www.lx.nhs.uk).

### National LINKs conference

The Department of Health are funding a one-day conference on **5 February 2009** for LINKs, supported by the NHS Centre for Involvement, the Healthcare Commission and CSCI together with CSIP, LGA and the NHS Confederation.

Although most LINKs are just starting work, they are keen to have an impact as soon as possible on local services. To help achieve this goal, they have said that they are keen to work together, learn from

one another and want access to advice, guidance and support.

This conference will give networks the chance to come together to discuss these issues and share individual as well as collective experiences. Further details are available on the LINKs Exchange.

### Listening and responding guide

A short guide to LINKs has been produced for health and social care managers.

The guide explains more about LINKs and how they can help services respond to the needs of local communities.

To download the guide, visit: [www.dh.gov.uk/links](http://www.dh.gov.uk/links).

### Last bulletin

This is the last issue of the Local Involvement Networks bulletin. In the future, advice, best practice and guidance will be shared through the online community for LINKs [www.lx.nhs.uk](http://www.lx.nhs.uk) and its regular e-bulletin.

The membership of the LINKs exchange is being opened up to LINKs members and the public later in November so that LINK participants can access this information.

To register visit: [www.lx.nhs.uk](http://www.lx.nhs.uk).

### Two new LINKs Guides published

These guides are part of a series aimed at helping make LINKs successful.

**Guide No. 14** – Annual reports is designed to help people involved with LINKs understand the requirements relating to the preparation and publication of annual reports about LINK activities.

**Guide No. 15** – Checking progress aims to help people involved with LINKs to measure the progress made with setting up LINKs.

To download these guides and others from the series go to:

[www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk/linksguides/](http://www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk/linksguides/)

## You share

**Building LINKs on local foundations** – ‘Team Host’ arrangements in Barnsley mean that its new LINKs will set out with excellent community engagement already in place, says Lynne Elliott, Chief Executive of one of the partners, Barnsley area.

When the Government announced its plans to set up LINKs, one of the first issues was how it could use the money available to strengthen existing community involvement in design and delivery of health and social care services without duplicating the extensive work that was already going on in this field.

Wide consultation with service users, carers and voluntary, community and independent service providers was already a fundamental principle of Barnsley’s Partnership In Action, a joint working agreement between the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) through which the two organisations integrate the planning, commissioning and provision of services of joint responsibility in Barnsley.

Partnership in Action has an integrated budget to provide services in six areas: mental health, older people, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and sensory impairment, substance misuse

and children and young people’s services.

To ensure the community has a strong voice in influencing these services, the Barnsley Participation Process (BPP) is supported by Voluntary Action Barnsley (VAB), which works with voluntary, community and independent sector organisations and Barnsley Arena, an independent organisation run by and for service users and carers in Barnsley.

“From the outset, it was clear that no one organisation could tender for the position of the LINK host,” says Lynne Elliot, Chief Executive of Barnsley Arena. “So we got together with VAB to explore the possibilities of joint hosting. Since neither of our organisations specialise in the children and young people’s sector, we then also invited Barnardo’s Voice and Influence Service to join us as a third partner.

“We won the tender and are equal partners in the hosting arrangement. Our steering group comprises the chief executive/managing director from each organisation. We all employ a LINK worker and these members of staff are expected to work closely together.

“Partnership is a core value for our three organisations and a central part of the work we do. In working together as a Host team we are demonstrating the partnership working that we would expect the LINK to reflect and to foster across Barnsley.”

Lynne says that, in a sense, Barnsley LINK is working backwards to many of its counterparts because it already has effective community engagement and won’t need to do any initial mapping exercises. VAB has 900 voluntary community groups on its database, Barnsley Arena has some 1,500 individual users and carers and Barnardo’s works with children and young people, parents and carers from around

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400 schools, community groups and organisations.

“For our first LINK presentation, we simply contacted people on these databases,” she explains. Around 130 people turned up to the event, where we discussed, among other things, all the different ways the members of our community could be involved. We also signed up six sub-groups to look at developing the LINK in terms of structure and policy, enter and view powers etc.”

Given the strength of existing partnerships in the area, the Barnsley LINK will not automatically take on all the issues that are brought to it. “We will take a look and then decide whether to field them to other organisations better placed to find a resolution,” says Lynne. “Our role is to fill gaps because there are many services which do not come under the umbrella of existing partnership arrangements. We need to find new ways to reach out to them.

“Meanwhile, the challenge is to get people to understand what the LINK is. The best way to do this is to take hold of a few burning issues, work and consult extensively and inclusively to find some solutions and then present a positive outcome. It will be important to demonstrate some early successes with the LINK.”

## In focus

### How is your LINK involving people with a learning disability?

Do you know who makes up your local Learning Disability Partnership Board? Do you know how they are working to transform the lives of people with a learning disability and their families?

Each Local Authority area has a Learning Disability Partnership Board and every

one is slightly different, but they are all working to bring about the vision of the White Paper ‘Valuing People’.

‘Valuing People’ is about to be re-launched as a three year work plan for Partnership Boards, and the agencies that feed in to them.

The Board – which is not itself a statutory body – has members from the Local Authority, the Primary Care Trust, Family Carers, Self Advocates, Employment Services, Advocacy Services, Voluntary Sector Agencies and more. The Local Authority Chief Executive has a duty to ensure that there is a functioning Learning Disability Partnership Board

The agenda is huge, but Boards will focus on some key priorities, for example a place to live, work and the chance to lead meaningful adult lives, having supports designed around individuals and improving health care.

Boards will also look at workforce training, transition from childhood to adulthood and into older age, support to carers, education and training, safety, transport, ethnicity, advocacy, self-advocacy and other local issues.

Boards can be chaired by a Local councillor with lead responsibility for social care, a family member, PCT Director, Director of Social Services, a Self Advocate or indeed any board member.

Your local LD Partnership Board will be keen to connect with the LINK and will have much to offer in return.

For details of your local board(s) see your local VPST Regional Advisor ([www.valuingpeople.gov.uk](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk)).

# Dates for the diary

## Healthcare Commission regional LINKs workshops

LINKs and working with the health and social care regulators:

Monday 10 November – Nottingham  
Thursday 13 November – York  
Wednesday 19 November – Croydon  
Wednesday 26 November – London

These events are designed to raise awareness to LINKs of the role of regulation in health and social care and to explore how the regulators and LINKs might work together. Overview and Scrutiny Committee representatives are also welcome to attend.

The events are being organised by OPM (Office of Public Management) on behalf of the regulators, Healthcare Commission, Commission for Social Care Inspectorate. Please contact Jasmine Miller ([jmiller@opm.co.uk](mailto:jmiller@opm.co.uk)) to book a place.

## Involving, Engaging, Empowering – PPI in action

The NHS Centre for Involvement's second annual conference is taking place on Tuesday 25 November 2008 at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in Birmingham.

For more information and to register visit [www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk/conference2008/](http://www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk/conference2008/)

## National LINKs conference

Thursday, 5 February 2009 – London. For further information visit: [www.lx.nhs.uk](http://www.lx.nhs.uk).

# Further information

To contact the LINKs helpdesk call 024 761 50705 or email [info@links.nhs.uk](mailto:info@links.nhs.uk).

To get advice and support on establishing LINKs call 024 761 50266 or visit: [www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk).

To find out more about LINKs policy visit: [www.dh.gov.uk/links](http://www.dh.gov.uk/links).

To access more Patient and Public Involvement resources visit: [www.library.nhs.uk/ppi](http://www.library.nhs.uk/ppi).