

Local Involvement Networks

Explaining the role of the NHS Centre for Involvement



What is NCI's Role?

The Department of Health has asked the NHS Centre for Involvement (NCI) to be the lead organisation for supplying advice and guidance about LINKs. The members of the NCI consortium are all actively involved. There are three strands of work taking place:

- practical advice, guidance and support;
- voluntary and community sector fieldwork; and
- LINKs Exchange (IT portal).

The plans for practical advice, guidance and support are:

Getting Ready and Getting Going (January 08 – September 08)

- Setting up a reference group to comment on specific products.
- Summary of health and social care aspects of the 2007 Act. This is available on the NCI website at www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk.
- 'What LINKs mean for you' (information sheets for Local Authorities; communities; and health and social care managers. These are available on the NCI website at www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk.
- Helpdesk and frequently asked questions - signposting 'local issues' through Local Authority LINK Leads initially and then Hosts when established (email info@links.nhs.uk).
- Surveys of Local Authority LINK Leads to assess progress.
- Monthly bulletins with latest information and good practice.
- Web-based guidance and advice about:
 - procurement and TUPE;
 - transitional arrangements;
 - mechanisms for raising awareness of LINKs;
 - teaching the 'hard to hear' and encouraging diversity;
 - working with volunteers;
 - setting up a LINK – what are the first things a LINK should do?
 - potential governance models;
 - policies and procedures – decision making and authorisation of representatives;
 - transparency and accountability - writing annual reports;
 - communicating objectives and outcomes of LINK activity;

- setting a work programme;
- understanding health and care needs and patterns of service provision;
- understanding the commissioning cycle (and practice based commissioning);
- questioning techniques, weighing evidence and presenting recommendations;
- code of Conduct about ‘entering and viewing’ – how to prepare, what to look for and behaviours;
- building relationships and working with other LINKs;
- making referrals to Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- working with regulators; and
- consultation and involvement.

The plans for Voluntary and Community Sector Fieldwork are:

Getting Ready and Getting Going (January 08 - October 08)

- A promotional programme amongst local voluntary and community sector organisations (VCOs) to promote the opportunities and benefits of their active engagement in LINKs. As a result, to increase the number of local VCOs that will be ready and expecting to engage with LINKs, and to increase the number of local and national VCOs considering formal LINKs membership.
- Once LINKs are established, to continue promotion of LINKs to local VCOs to increase numbers joining their local LINK as members or participating organisations.
- The programme will use existing sources of information and guidance (for example Early Adopter Project factsheets, Department of Health policy documents, NHS Centre for Involvement compendium).
- To use broadcast materials through voluntary and community sector networks to establish an understanding of the concept and timing of LINKs in the minds of most VCO individuals concerned with health and social care, and those concerned with VCO mechanisms for infrastructure and engagement.
- To provide more detailed information in accessible formats to be presented through various media to those local VCOs and people interested in finding out more about LINKs during the period of their establishment.
- To signpost local VCOs to further information and support for LINKs if they want it, and as it becomes available.

The plans for the LINKs Exchange (IT portal) are:

Getting Ready and Getting Going (January 08 – June 09)

- To provide a web-based portal to support the establishment and development of LINKs.
- Initially to provide a secure on-line community for the Department of Health, the NHS Centre for Involvement, Local Authority LINK Leads and Host organisations to communicate with each other.
- In the longer term to provide a secure online community for LINK members/participants to communicate, collaborate and network with each other.
- To provide a repository for LINK review reports and annual reports.