

**North Tyneside LINK
Board Meeting
12 July 2011**

Communication and membership report

1. Communication activities to date

Newsletter: The June edition of Stronger Voice was distributed on 14 June 2011. The newsletter included LINK's priorities for the next year and the new arrangements for health and wellbeing.

E-newsletter: The July e-newsletter will be issued on 13 July and will link to information about the LINK event on 29 September and updates on LINK projects and consultation responses.

Website: There were 4493 visitors to the LINK website in May and 4047 visitors in June 2011. We have created new pages for the reablement, home care and adults with autism projects

Press coverage: We issued a press release about the LINK transitions event on 30 June which was later cancelled due to industrial action by teachers.

Publicity: We produced a poster advertising the transitions event on 30 June which was distributed to schools.

Annual report: We published the LINK annual report 2010/11 and sent a copy to the Department of Health in advance of their deadline. We have sent hard copy annual reports to lead officers at North Tyneside Council and local NHS trusts and sent emails to interested people and organisations with a link to the annual report on the LINK website. Hard copies of the report are available on request.

Membership

We now currently have **267** LINK members so far. (**187** Individuals) (**67** Group) (**13** Board)

3. Issues raised:

3.1. An individual LINK member brought an issue to LINK concerning the waiting time for anyone who is transgendered and wants to go through the transition process. This service is based at Cherry Knowle Hospital as part of NTW Trust. There are separate elements to this process which all seem to have delays:-

- 1) Appointments(s) for psychological evaluation
- 2) Treatment with relevant hormones
- 3) Monitoring throughout 'Real Life Experience'
- 4) Referral for surgery
- 5) Achievement of a Gender Recognition Certificate

Our member reported, as TyneTrans acting Chairperson, that Cherry Knowle Hospital was originally funded for around 30 referrals per year, but now has a waiting list of 169 individuals. Due to its increasing size, the waiting was (in effect) 'closed' last September and no new people are being taken onto it. Those who are currently on the list can face a waiting time (for even stage (1) above) of at least 9 months, with some having no definite date for a first appointment. Our member feels this is a resource issue that is resulting in a serious threat to the well-being of people with gender issues.

3.2. An individual LINK member has raised an issue following their experience at Freeman Hospital.

A letter which was sent from one consultant to another went missing and was not picked up until the individual queried the wait. Once this was realised they received an appointment within four days.

This issue has been forwarded to Newcastle LINK for their information.

3.3. An individual LINK member has reported that her son has waited for 2½ years to see an Occupational therapist. After a move from London to North Tyneside her son was dropped to the bottom of the waiting list. The individual is asking whether this service could be improved regarding waiting times.

3.4. A married couple living in sheltered housing spoke about how difficult it was to decide to move from their long term homes, but both agreed it had been one of the best decisions they had ever made. They praised the staff, the services available and the gardens at the Court but most importantly for them both spoke of the positive impact the opportunity for social interaction and the sense of community had made to their lives.

The lady had one small issue which she was happy for this to be reported. The lady uses an electric wheel chair and lives in a flat in the court which is specially adapted for wheel chair users. The design of the kitchen incorporates a space under the sink for a wheel chair user to pull right up to the sink. However, this is not possible as the sink bowl which falls below the level of the work surface makes it impossible to pull up to the sink in a wheel chair. Because of this the lady has requested that this space be filled with a cupboard, as would be standard in other flats, so at least she could use the space for storage rather than look at the exposed pipe work. This request has been refused without any discussion or consultation, which the lady has found frustrating.

3.5. A previous issue brought to the board at their last meeting has since been resolved.

Alison to update

3.6. An individual LINK member would like to raise the issue of why the 'Choose and Book' system the PCT have is not publicised more.

4. Planned activities

Myself, Alison and Meg met on 4 July to discuss membership recruitment. We all agreed that recruitment definitely needs to be improved upon and our main target in the next few months will be G.P surgeries, possibly visiting surgeries, leaving leaflets, membership forms etc. Meg will be producing a new information leaflet for distribution.

A discussion took place around involving non active members around recruitment/ promoting LINK in the future. We would like to encourage all members to involve themselves more with LINK but would need to be more informed before they go out into the public arena.

We would like to encourage LINK representatives to get involved too if they wish.

Meg Woollam

Christine O'Brien