

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The LINK needs to have a standardised decision making process. This paper sets out the process by which decisions relating to priorities will be made and the roles that the various partners have in the process.
- 1.2 In this paper an “issue” is any matter that could impact on health and adult social care in North Tyneside.
- 1.3 The LINK Team will act as the ‘clearing house’ for issues and all issues, regardless of their source, will be raised with the LINK Team and managed through this process (e.g. monthly report from the Issues database).
- 1.4 A LINK exists to:
 - Promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local health and adult social care services
 - Obtain the views of people about their needs for, and their experiences of, local health and adult social care services
 - Enable people to monitor and review the commissioning and provision of care services
 - Convey people’s views to organisations responsible for commissioning, providing, managing and scrutinising local health and adult social care services and recommend how services can be improved

2. Gathering Issues

- 2.1 The LINK Team will gather issues from ‘calls’ [via internet; public meetings; newsletters or outreach], research done by the LINK team, the Board and regular analysis of issues raised by members of the public or members of the LINK.
- 2.2 The LINK manager will make regular reports to the Board about activities designed to gather issues and how effective these different activities have been.
- 2.3 Gathering issues is an open and on-going process but will be subject to periodic intensive promotion. Emergency issues can be raised at any time and will be dealt through an established emergency process (see below).
- 2.4 All individuals and groups raising issues will receive an acknowledgement that the issue has been received and the details of the date of the Board meeting that will make a decision as to how their issue will be handled by the LINK.



3. Reporting Issues to the Board

3.1 In their role as 'clearing house' the LINK Team will report all issues to the Board. The LINK Team will also report on emerging issues.

3.2 Reports on specific issues will include:

- An assessment of how the issues fits, or do not fit, within the LINK remit
- A summary of the evidence, if any, gathered to date
- An analysis of the priority of the issue [see below]
- Details of any other work that appears to be have been done around the same issue
- An outline project plan, including outline budgets, and timeline for the work that would be required on the issue. These proposals should include, where practicable, options for staffing a project that might include:
 - The LINK Team managing the work of a group of individual
 - The LINK Team co-ordinating the work of a group of organisations
 - Contracting the work out to a single organisation or group of organisations

3.3 Reports will be agreed, where possible, with the individual or group that have raised the issue, and the individual or group will be offered the opportunity to make a brief presentation to the Board where appropriate.

4. Decision Making

4.1 The Board will decide on the possibility of the LINK taking action on any issue based on evidence presented to them. The decision will be based on:

- An assessment of the importance of the work and the impact of the issue on the residents of North Tyneside.
- The cost of the work – including consideration of the various options for completing the work.
- The possibility that other organisations could undertake the work

4.2 The Board has, amongst others, the options of:

- Asking the LINK Team to prepare additional evidence to be presented at a later Board meeting.
- Agreeing that the issue is a priority and agreeing [or amending] the outline project plan
- Asking the LINK team to seek partners, including other LINKs, to complete a piece of work
- Deciding that the issue is not one that a LINK could pursue
- Letting the matter 'lie on the table' and asking the LINK Manager to monitor developments with a view to considering the matter again at a later date.

4.3 In the case of an emergency issue, defined as one that requires action before the Board is able to meet, the Chair of the LINK Board is empowered to make a decision on the advice of the LINK Manager. Such decisions shall be subsequently presented for ratification by the Board.



- 4.4 Once an issue has been agreed to be part of the LINK Work programme the LINK Manager will be responsible for making sure that the work is progressed. Summary reports will be available to the Board at each of their meetings.
- 4.5 At the conclusion of any piece of work, or at agreed milestones, the Board will make decisions as the next actions to be taken. The Board will agree any report before publication and will decide to whom it will be referred. Options include:
- Discussions with the service provider and/or commissioner
 - Referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Referral to the Care Quality Commission
 - Seeking a wider public debate around an issue
 - Other actions

5. After the Board Meeting

- 5.1 The LINK Team will write to all individuals and groups whose issues were discussed at a Board meeting to inform them of the Board decision and briefly explain the reason for that decision. If appropriate, for example if the Board feels that an issue would be better pursued through a complaints procedure, the Manager will endeavour to advise the individual or group as to their options and could, with their agreement, seek to make a referral to an appropriate organisation.

6. Criteria for considering priorities within the LINK

- 6.1 In order for an issue to be considered by the LINK it must meet the following criteria:
- It must relate to health and/or adult social care services.
 - It must affect or have the potential to affect, the residents of North Tyneside
- 6.2 Once an issue has been identified that meets the above criteria it can be forwarded for consideration into the LINK work plan. The following criteria will be used in order to prioritise issues for inclusion in the plan.
- Number of People affected by the issue
 - Impact of issue on individuals
 - Levels of disadvantage and/or vulnerability of individuals affected
 - Potential impact of LINK action
 - The resources available to the LINK [in the event that sufficient resources are not available to allow a piece of work to be included in the plan the LINK Board can ask **VODA** to consider making funding applications aimed at providing additional resources to the LINK]
- 6.3 Board decisions on priorities shall be by a simple majority of those present

7. Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed by September 2011

LINK Manager
September 2010

