



Annual Review Report

January 2010



The Langdale Centre, Howdon, Wallsend

Thursday 28 January 2010

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1 Introduction and Aims

LINK held its first annual meeting on Thursday 28 of January 2010 at The Langdale Centre in Howdon, Wallsend. This was an opportunity to find out about LINK's work over the last year (including commissioned work) and to consider what issues LINK should take forward as its priority in 2010. Over 70 LINK members, partners and interested individuals took part in the event.

2 Background

North Tyneside LINK was formally established in December 2008 when its interim Board put into place a number of policies and procedures necessary to be a working LINK. In January and February of 2009 LINK held a number of events across North Tyneside to tell the public about LINK, invite people to become members and to contribute to its work plan (pictured below).

These meetings resulted in a list of priorities for LINK to work on over 2009. A report from the 2009 events including a full list of priorities is available to download from LINK's website.

LINK now has 200 members, some of whom represent LINK on its Board, at local and regional forums and as members of working groups. Over the past year LINK members have worked with North Tyneside Council and staff from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and North Tyneside PCT to discuss current and future services, to pose questions to relevant staff and to share patients and carers' views on local services.



3 Event

The event took place on Thursday 28 January at the Langdale Centre in Howdon. Over 70 people attended the event, a combination of LINK members, Board members, health and social care representatives and other interested individuals.

Attendees spent the morning hearing about LINK's work over the last year, including current projects and commissioned work. Attendees also heard from partners that LINK has worked with, including Dave Parkin from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, and Georgia Douglas of the Hospital Discharge Team based at North Tyneside General Hospital.



(l-r) Georgia Douglas, Dave Parkin and LINK Development Worker Hannah Claydon

Following this members were introduced to their representatives (pictured below) and LINK Board members.

During the lunchtime period attendees were invited to look around a market stall of local health and social care services and to network with one another.



LINK Representatives (l-r) Dot Lee, Lindsay Perks, Mary Ayre and David Melrose

4 Workshop Summary

Members were divided into five workshops to discuss current issues in North Tyneside and to consider what they might like LINK to focus on over the next year. Workshops were facilitated by LINK members and Board members. Following these discussions, groups were asked to report back their three LINK priorities. Below is a list of these priorities.

- GP Out of Hours Services
- Personalisation: Members were concerned that there still isn't much information about personalisation, and that we haven't heard from people on personal budgets about their experiences. This is a current LINK project, which will continue to run. Comments made at the Annual LINK event regarding suggestions for action will be taken to LINK's Personalisation working group, which will meet in March.
- Quality of Home Care: Issues were raised around the working conditions of staff delivering these services and the training and support they receive. It was felt that these issues have an effect on the quality of the service.
- Podiatry: Members feel that current podiatry services do not meet the needs of local residents and that it is difficult to get appointments. A working group looking at podiatry is currently hosted by the Community Health Care Forum.
- Pharmacy Services in relation to hospital discharge – Members are concerned that patients at North Tyneside General Hospital are having their discharge delayed as a result of delays in prescriptions being dispensed from the hospital based pharmacy. This issue can be taken up within LINKs ongoing Hospital Discharge Project.
- Equality of Access to Health Services (GPs): Members were concerned that GPs are most people's first point of call for accessing health services and that they are the gatekeepers in terms of access to medication and further medical referrals. The concern was that access to these services would depend on individual GPs. For example, a patient might be displaying physical symptoms, but the underlying cause may be mild depression, or the result of caring responsibilities. Not all GPs would recognise this.
- Dentistry: Members are concerned about limited access to NHS dental services in North Tyneside.
- Long Term Conditions - The effectiveness of prevention and diagnosis: This was a general comment and no specific issues have been raised regarding a particular service or issue.
- Access to Primary Care Services: This covers dentistry, GP services and podiatry.
- Wider Inclusion of Patient Groups and Health Professionals: Some members were concerned about the lack of involvement of some patient groups, and questioned the involvement of health professionals. They were assured that all patient groups in North Tyneside have been contacted and invited to take part in LINK, whether they want to become a member or come to events would be their decision. LINK

staff also confirmed that health professionals can become LINK members or associated members providing they fall into the category of living, working or accessing services in North Tyneside. LINK has a number of professional members, including staff from Northumbria Healthcare, North Tyneside PCT and North Tyneside Council.

- There was a suggestion for increased 'joined-up' working.

As a result of some of these suggestions, LINK members were reminded and encouraged to spread the word about LINK and invite those that they think might be interested to take part or become a member

5 Issues Raised by Members and Through LINK Engagement Work

As well as using the annual event as an opportunity to involve LINK members in the development of the 2010 work plan, LINK has actively engaged other areas of the community, such as parents, young people and those living in the North West of North Tyneside (an area where LINK currently lacks representation from members). Below are the issues identified through these engagement activities.

- Patient experiences/staff attitudes: Individual members have told LINK about their experiences in North Tyneside General Hospital. A recurring concern is that of staff attitudes towards patients, especially older patients. Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust will be looking at this issue internally, and it may be an opportunity for LINK to ensure patients and carers experiences are captured as part of this.
- Health visitors: The issue of continuity of care and of information from health visitors was raised by parents through LINKs' Children's Centre survey, which was carried out in Wallsend and Howdon. Parents were concerned that they were receiving contradictory advice from health visitors regarding the benefits of breastfeeding and parents had also indicated that they would like ante and post natal classes led by health visitors regarding care and identification of problems with new born babies.
- GP appointment systems: Making appointments with GPs appears to be an issue for many LINK members and members of the public across North Tyneside. This issue has been raised in the North West of the borough, in Wallsend and Howdon and by young people from across North Tyneside. Patients complain of having to ring early in the morning to get an appointment, of repeatedly not being able to get through to the receptionist and in one case a woman had to call back over 30 times to get an appointment.

6 Recommendations for the Board

Some 15 issues have been raised by LINK members. Some of these fall into projects already in existence and others, such as inclusion of patient groups is part of on going membership development work. Therefore the following recommendations for LINKs' 2010 work plan have been made to the LINK Board:

- GP Services: there is a wider issue about GPs in general including access to appointments and equality of access to services. The Board might like to look at the issue of GPs in this wider context of access.
- Quality of Home Care: LINK could investigate quality of services and issues that impact on the service.
- Podiatry: As many LINK members are now raising this as an issue, LINK might like to invite the Community Health Care Forum to tell us what progress has been made and see whether LINKs' powers could be used to support the work of CHCF.
- Dentistry: Members are concerned about limited access to NHS dental services in North Tyneside.
- Patient experiences/staff attitudes: Concern from a number of individual LINK members. This is also an issue being looked at within Northumbria Healthcare, who would be interested in working with LINK on this issue.

Following the annual event, LINK held a young people's event in February (pictured below) to find out what the priorities for young people living in North Tyneside are. A report of the event is available on the LINK website or by request. Two priorities were identified, and will also be recommended to the Board to appear in LINKs' work plan.

- Mental Health: Young people are concerned that there is not enough information and publicity regarding mental health problems and not enough is being done to tackle the stigma attached to mental health conditions. Young people also feel that health professionals need to appear more approachable to encourage young people to open up to them.
- Staff Attitudes: Young people have had mixed experiences when accessing health services, but staff attitudes is a big factor contributing to bad experiences, ranging from unhelpful reception staff to consultants who make young people feel intimidated.

LINK will work on selected topics within its capacity and, where appropriate, will commission work from within the local voluntary and community sector.



7 Next Steps

This report will be shared with the LINK Board along with a list of work plan recommendations. These recommendations will also be shared with the wider membership through the website and Stronger Voice newsletter. This will give members who were unable to attend the annual event an opportunity to give their comments and opinions on these priorities.

Following Board approval, LINK will develop project proposals around each priority. Members will be invited to be involved in the projects that interest or concern them.

As the LINK team has limited capacity, as well as calling on our members to take part in projects, the Board may decide to commission individual projects to the local voluntary and community sector.

8 Evaluation Feedback

Feedback from the participant evaluation forms was overwhelmingly positive. However, some participants felt that there were too many health professionals and agencies at the meeting. LINK will look to hold more events at alternative times to be more accessible to its members and the wider public, such as in the evenings.

Some concerns and suggestions related to the distance between the main hall and the market place and that the venue could have been closer to a metro station. On the day the wheelchair lift at the venue was not working, which created problems for some members.

There were mixed experiences of the discussion groups, with two participants commenting that they felt their discussion was dominated by a small number of people.

Other comments from the day included:

“Great opportunity to share experiences and knowledge”

“I enjoyed the day. I found everyone very helpful and I got a warm welcome. I felt valued. The food was good and I could hear all that was said.”

“Very well organised. Plenty opportunity to network. Excellent reports of work done. Discussion in groups - food for thought.”

