



# **LINK Report: Children's Centre Survey Results**



**December 2009**

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## 1. Introduction

During September and October 2009 LINK undertook an engagement exercise with Children's Centres in Wallsend and Howdon. The aim of this exercise was to discover what the health and adult social care service concerns and priorities of parents/carers in this area. The demographic typical of children's centre users was identified as a gap in LINK's membership.

## 2. Gathering Evidence

LINK staff attended a Stay and Play and Bumps to Babies sessions at Wallsend and Howdon Children's Centres, as well as an event at The Parks in North Shields. During this period we spoke to 48 parents and carers of young children. We asked people to complete a short survey rating the services that they access, identifying concerns and making suggestions for service improvements.

On the whole, people rated their services (generally GP services) as Good or Very Good. However, there were recurring themes in terms of concerns and suggestions.

Concerns	Suggestions
<p><b>Access to GPs</b> GP appointment systems make it difficult to get an appointment.</p>	<p>Review the system. Allow people to book further in advance.</p> <p>More evening and weekend appointments to be made available.</p>
<p><b>Midwives and Health visitors</b> Continuity of care from midwives and health visitors – mothers find that they often see different professionals who give them different information and advice. There was particular concern regarding conflicting breastfeeding advice.</p>	<p>Mothers would like to see the same health visitor or midwife throughout their care.</p> <p>Parents would feel more confident about the information they are receiving if professionals gave the same information.</p>

Parents would appreciate more post-natal information on basics from their health visitor i.e. bathing, minor ailments, what to look out for.	Parents would like a post natal parenting course to be made available
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There were also some discussions and concern expressed about maternity services, particularly at the RVI in Newcastle where people felt they had not received quality of care due to the service being overwhelmed. This comment will be passed on to Newcastle LINK for their records.

### **3. LINK's Workplan**

The results of the Children's Centre survey will be fed in to LINK's overall workplan. Through membership forms and other outreach work, residents across North Tyneside have expressed concern to LINK about accessing GPs. There is a particular issue around appointment booking systems. People complain of having to ring back over and over again to get through to make an appointment (one woman rang back 34 times). People we have spoken to prefer the previous system of booking appointments in advance and having an open surgery. This would allow people to plan routine appointments, but to still be able to see a GP for a same day appointment if necessary.

This issue has been raised in particular with Portugal Place Health Centre, Berwick Road Medical Centre and Dudley Health Centre, but the issue has also been raised by young people across the borough.

### **4. Using the Report**

This report has been sent to the Children's Centres that took part in the survey, to North Tyneside Primary Care Trust (the organisation responsible for contracting GP and health visitor services) and to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (the organisation responsible for North Tyneside General Hospital). The Trusts have been asked to comment on the issues raised in this report which are dealt with by their organisation.

This report has also been sent to North Tyneside LINK's Board. The Board are responsible for deciding whether the issues raised should be added to LINKs' work plan. The concerns expressed in this report will also be taken to the LINKs' Annual Event on the 28 January 2010, where LINK members will consider the health and social care priorities for North Tyneside. If the Board and members decide that any of the issues raised in this report should be priorities, then LINK will undertake further investigation, where possible involving the people who raised the concerns and working with service providers and commissioners (the people who pay for them) to improve services.

## 5. Responses

### 5.1 Response from North Tyneside PCT

- **Access to GPs - waiting times for GP appointments North Tyneside**

Your comments and recommendations support what we have already identified as issues over the last two years and we currently have work in progress to improve matters.

For example, we have already encouraged GP practices to open more flexibly. There are 25 of the 29 practices in North Tyneside which operate extended opening hours, which means that they offer booked appointments outside the normal working hours of 8am to 6.30pm.

We also monitor the feedback that we receive. An example of this is the independent survey by the Department of Health, carried out by Ipsos MORI available on the internet through the Department of Health website at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/PublishedSurvey/GPpatientsurvey2007/index.htm>

Any anomalies would be picked up as part of the discussions between primary care commissioning and individual practices. The way we do this is to use the data we receive from the survey.

Taking the three practices in North Tyneside that you mention in your report, if we look at satisfaction with being able to see a GP quickly (i.e. within 48 hours for a routine appointment), from the 2009 survey the data is:

Bewicke	83%
Portugal Place	88%
Woodlands Park	91%
(there is no separate data available for Dinnington or Dudley as this population is served by a range of practices)	
PCT Average	85%

The North Tyneside PCT scores above the national average of 84%.

We have also heard some feedback that you mention regarding telephoning for appointments. We have received mixed feedback about this. Where we know the practice, we have been able to raise this specifically with the practice manager and GPs to identify if there is a particular problem. We ask what they are doing about it, support and encourage them to improve, and require them to act if they do not meet the requirements of their contract.

We will be feeding back the results of your report and recommendations to practices in the area and particularly to those practices mentioned above, so that they will be able to look for opportunities for improvements, reviewing their systems as you suggest.

There is also a similar pattern with satisfaction with opening hours. We continue to work with practices to improve satisfaction levels.

Although we did some recent publicity, it may be that we need to do more targeted work with the practices in the area to ensure that patients are aware of the extended opening times. Perhaps we should also take the opportunity to promote again the walk-in services provided everyday from 8am to 8pm at the new Battle Hill GP-led health centre. I will ask the public engagement and communications team to explore this option.

- **Midwives and health visitors – continuity of care, conflicting information and more postnatal information**

Midwives in North Tyneside are employed by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and I note that you are also seeking a response from the trust.

With regard to continuity of care from midwives and health visitors and conflicting advice regarding breast feeding, this matter has already been recently brought to our attention through a survey carried out of women who have recently used maternity services. There were also comments in your report that parents would appreciate more postnatal information on matters such as bathing and minor ailments from their health visitor. We are currently in the process of reporting back to the Maternity Services Liaison Committee, and then to the Maternity Partnership Board. The Maternity Services Liaison Committee involves service users and makes recommendations to the Maternity Partnership Board. The Board consists of the main providers of maternity care and other community and voluntary sector providers, as well as public health and meets quarterly to discuss the provision of maternity care across North of Tyne.

Through each of these discussions, we will identify the actions of the partnership to resolve the concerns and consider the suggestions that you make.

We will inform you of the outcome of the discussion at the next Maternity Partnership Board meeting, planned in March.

We also discuss quality of care issues at separate contract meetings with providers. These contract discussions will include the local concerns you have raised about the Newcastle service.

In terms of breast feeding, since sending this report to us, you may have had the chance to look at our draft strategic plan for 2010/14. If so, you may have noticed that increasing breast feeding rates is one of the 17 initiatives that we will be focusing on to improve health and reduce the health inequalities that currently exist across our area. This will involve implementing the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative, combined with good peer support systems and more high profile public information campaigns (informed by social marketing).

## **5.2 Response from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

There is a team of four community midwives based in the Wallsend team they work together to provide antenatal intrapartum and post natal care to all the pregnant

women within the Wallsend area. The team also provides parent education classes and advice from other venues including Children centres.

Each pregnant mother has a lead midwife identified who co ordinate her care through out the pregnancy and post natal period, the midwives work as a team to ensure that each women receives continuity of care. It is not possible for one midwife to be available to each women as we provide a 24 hour service every day of the week and this means that midwives have to take days off during the week if they are working the weekend. Even though the same midwife is not there the care delivered is standardised and therefore should be of the same standard in terms of continuity of advice and support.

All of the midwives receive training in supporting breast feeding mums and there training is updated on a regular basis, we have recently employed a breast feeding co coordinator midwife whose role is to ensure that the midwives give consistent advice in line with NICE recommendation and we are working towards the implementation of UNICEF baby friendly accreditation for delivering consistent and supportive care to breast feeding mothers.

There may have been a problem during this report period as 2 of the Wallsend community midwifery team members have been off on long tern sick which has resulted in other midwives joining the team and providing cover, this may have affected the continuity of the care from the team. The midwives have now all returned so hopefully this situation should have resolved. I will pass on the comments to the team.

## **6. Next Steps**

LINK is developing leaflets for parents and carers who use Children's Centres in order to give them feedback from this report and information on how to make a complaint and get support when using health services.

Children's Centres is developing a parent education course alongside local midwives in order to address some of the issues raised by parents including the need for information for tasks such as bathing and feeding babies.

**If you would like to find out more about this piece of work, have a comment or experience you would like to share with us regarding any of the issues raised in this report please contact LINK on 0191 200 1429, or by email [link@voda.org.uk](mailto:link@voda.org.uk).**

**LINK would like to thank staff from Wallsend and Howdon Children's Centres for their assistance in carrying out this research.**

**LINK would like to thank North Tyneside PCT and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for their responses to this LINK report.**