



Stronger Voice

Your newsletter from North Tyneside LINK

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As a member of LINK, this is **your** newsletter. If you wish to contribute an article, or if there's something else you would like to see, email amy.rudd@voda.org.uk

Launch Events Help to Shape the Work of the LINK

January and February saw the official launch of North Tyneside LINK with four events held around the borough. The aim of the events was to begin to shape the workplan of the LINK, based on the health and adult social care priorities of the people, groups and organisations of North Tyneside.

Over 50 people (individuals and representatives of groups and organisations) attended the events and engaged in a mapping exercise of issues, before voting on their top five priorities.

Group discussions then followed to establish what exactly the LINK could do to improve or develop these issues. This generated many interesting ideas and suggestions which have all helped to 'shape the LINK'.

Along with previous research and information gathered from returned membership forms, the events have now given LINK several priorities to focus its work on. These include Urgent Care, Counselling and Personalisation. More on the work that LINK is undertaking can be found on pages 2 and 3.



A full report from the events has now been produced and sent to all of the attendees, LINK Board members and other interested parties. You can download the report from the Publications section of our website (www.linknorthtyneside.org.uk) or request a copy by contacting LINK on 0191 200 1429.

This newsletter is available in large print, other languages and on audio cassette. To request any of these formats, contact LINK on 0191 200 1429 or email link@voda.org.uk

The Work of North Tyneside LINK

As described on the front page, LINK now has several projects underway. In order to begin this work the LINK team had to submit, and have agreed, project proposals to the LINK Board. This procedure will be followed every time LINK wishes to undertake a new piece of work based on the priorities of the people and patients of North Tyneside. The following pages summarise these projects and the progress made on them so far.

Urgent Care

Urgent care in North Tyneside is changing. With new plans for services across Northumbria Healthcare's area including a new emergency care hospital (based near Cramlington), LINK is establishing a working group to keep up to speed with NHS plans. Are you particularly interested in Urgent Care issues? If so, and you'd like to be a part of this working group, please contact LINK with your details.

For more information on what we are looking for in a working group member please see page 4 on becoming an 'Active' LINK member.

Report on Urgent Care Events

In March, North Tyneside LINK invited LINK members and the general public to attend two meetings to discuss the NHS plans for a new specialist emergency care hospital. This forms part of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's Urgent Care Strategy. The aim of the events was to learn more about the NHS plans and to gather the views and concerns of those who attended.

Over 30 LINK members attended these meetings and had the opportunity to hear a presentation on the plans and put questions to Steve Russell, Director of Urgent Care and David Evans, Director of Medicine.

In the discussions that followed a number of issues emerged from LINK members that we felt needed clarifying before LINK submits its final response to the Trust's plans. Therefore, LINK has asked Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to give us further information and answer a number of questions raised at the events. Once this information has been received, we will be able to develop a LINK response to the formal consultation undertaken by the NHS North of Tyne, which closes in July.



Hospital Discharge



The Hospital Discharge process has been identified as an area of local concern. It is also a timely issue as North Tyneside Council's Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee are currently investigating how current Hospital Discharge procedures can be improved on.

On 19 March 2009, LINK held a lively and well-attended event at Segedunum in Wallsend in order to gather people's experiences of hospital discharge (both good and bad) and suggestions for how the process could be improved. The information shared with us will go into a report that will be given to the Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee, and which will be used to help shape future plans and improvements.

A report from this event will very soon be available to download from our website, or you can request a copy by calling LINK on 0191 200 1429.

Personalisation



You may have already seen on our website that LINK is developing a project focusing on the implementation of the Personalisation of adult social care in North Tyneside. We are looking for LINK members with experience or expertise in adult social care to become members of a working group that will be responsible for taking this project forward. Contact LINK if you wish to take part.

Better Information



LINK members have identified the quality and availability of information provision as a concern throughout health and adult social care services. In order to identify the issues in more detail LINK is undertaking a scoping exercise with local carers and will be investigating what information exists and who provides it.

Counselling



LINK members are concerned about counselling services and feel that local provision is inadequate. We have commissioned the Community and Health Care Forum to undertake a piece of research that will map counselling provision in North Tyneside. From this, we hope to be able to identify gaps in provision and to make recommendations to service providers.

Become an 'Active' LINK Member

Much of North Tyneside LINK's work will be taken forward by task groups. These groups will be charged with examining certain aspects of health and adult social care and making proposals to improve services.

We envisage that each task group will consist of LINK members who can bring wide experience of the issues in question and that this knowledge will be supplemented by other active LINK members who bring particular and valuable skills to the group. Task groups will (usually) be time limited and will work to a clear remit set by the LINK Board. All task group members will be expected to:

✓	Attend meetings
✓	Play an active role in the work of the group and be prepared to do delegated work to an agreed timetable set by the LINK Board
✓	Work with colleagues from a range of backgrounds
✓	Deal with sensitive information on a confidential basis and work within the policies and procedures of the LINK
✓	Be willing to take notes of meetings, report project progress to the LINK Board and take advice and direction from them

We already have a growing list of members who have wide personal knowledge of specific health and adult social care issues, but we are keen to identify members who have generic skills and/or experience that will enable them to:

✓	Lead projects and take responsibility for progressing the work of a group
✓	Research issues, summarise documents and prepare reports
✓	Design effective interview scripts or questionnaires and support other team members in using these tools
✓	Write reports and present them to a range of audiences
✓	Carry out the 'enter and view' function

Task group members will receive reasonable expenses and will have the full support of their colleagues and the LINK staff.

If you are interested in registering as an active volunteer, please contact LINK today on 0191 200 1429 or email link@voda.org.uk



Opportunities to Represent LINK

There are a variety of groups in North Tyneside that LINK has been invited, or has an entitlement, to be a part of. It is not possible for LINK Board members to sit on all of these groups and we would therefore like to invite those of you with experience or expertise in certain areas to sit on these groups as official LINK representatives.

As an official representative you would be authorised by the LINK Board to speak on behalf of the LINK. In order to ensure that members attending such groups fully represent the LINK, the Board have come up with a short list of requirements that they expect from official LINK representatives:

✓	Represent the LINK, not personal interests
✓	Attend regular meetings
✓	Liaise with LINK staff once an agenda has been received to determine if the LINK holds any evidence that is relevant to the group and to discuss the views that the LINK might want to express
✓	Report back to LINK staff on meetings attended

We currently need members on the following groups/committees:

Long Term Care
Group: NHS
North of Tyne

Equality, Diversity
and Human Rights
Group: NHS
North of Tyne

Health & Social
Care Group:
VONNE
(Voluntary Organisations
Network North East)

If you are interested in, or would like further information about any of these opportunities, please contact LINK on 0191 200 1429 or email link@voda.org.uk

Health &
Wellbeing Theme
Partnership:
North Tyneside
Council

STOP PRESS!

The Department of Health has agreed to fund a North East Conference for LINK members. It will be held at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland during July 2009. Each LINK will have places for at least 12 members. More details to follow!

Board Recruitment

Every LINK needs to have some way of making decisions about priorities, managing the various groups of LINK members, signing off reports and making decisions about how they will be used. In the case of North Tyneside LINK these responsibilities are carried out by a Board drawn from LINK members.

So far, LINK has been running with an interim board drawn from the three organisations that set up the LINK (**VODA**, North Tyneside Community and Health Care Forum and Age Concern North Tyneside). We've now got to the point where the interim board needs to hand over to a board drawn from members of the LINK.

The Board will be made up of between 12 and 15 individuals. Of these:

- **SIX** will be drawn from individual members of the LINK
 - **SIX** will be drawn from organisations that are members of the LINK
 - **THREE** will be co-opted by the Board to fill any obvious gaps in experience
- Board members will be appointed for a period of up to three years with one third retiring each year.

Members of the Board will be appointed by an interview panel drawn from LINK members, and they will be supported in this task by an independent consultant. All prospective members will need to demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for the job. The main roles of the Board will include:

- ✓ Making decisions about the priorities for the work of the LINK and deciding on the allocation of a budget
- ✓ Providing advice and guidance for LINK members who are working on projects
- ✓ 'Signing off' the content of all LINK reports and activities
- ✓ Working with the local authority to assess the work of **VODA** as the LINK host
- ✓ Acting as an ambassador for the LINK in a wide range of forums

Board members will need to be able to:

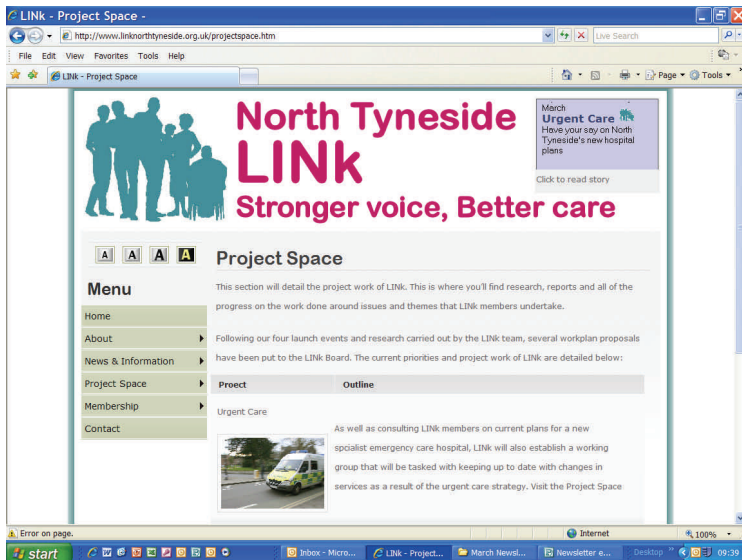
- ✓ Show an understanding of the broad issues in health and adult social care
- ✓ Contribute to the Board's decision making
- ✓ Show that they have the confidence to advocate on behalf of the LINK
- ✓ Work closely with the host organisation

Interview panel members will need to feel confident about making an assessment of the skills of other LINK members. Experience of interviewing and appointing staff would be an advantage. If you want to be considered to become a Board member or if you'd like to be part of the interview panel that chooses the Board please contact Dave Shaw on 0191 200 1429 or email dave.shaw@voda.org.uk

Timetable of Board Recruitment

April 17 Deadline for expressions of interest in being on interview panel	May 5 Information packs sent to individuals interested in being on the Board	May 15 Deadline for returning Board Recruitment packs	May 18-25 Assessment of applicants	June 9 First meeting of newly appointed Board
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North Tyneside LINK Website



If you haven't already done so, why not pay a visit to North Tyneside LINK's website - www.linknorthtyneside.org.uk. The easy-to-use site has all of the information on LINK's background, current project work and will, very soon, feature a new blog facility that will allow members to discuss and make comments on health and adult social care issues online. Here is a breakdown of pages:

About: These pages contain the background to LINKs, why and how they were set up and information about the host organisation (**VODA**). Here you will also find details of how LINK is governed and all of the policies and procedures that LINK follows (available to download in pdf and Word versions).

News & Information: This section is split in to two main pages.

News & Events - where you will find all of the latest happenings of LINK and details of any forthcoming events. There is also a page dedicated to news and events from the wider world of health and adult social care.

Publications - downloadable versions of everything published by LINK, from our newsletters to reports and any other documents we think may be of interest to LINK members.

Project Space: These pages contain information about the actual work of the LINK. Here you will find the background to our projects, how you can get involved and any related reports or publications.

Membership: This is where you can join the LINK - as well as a downloadable versions of our Membership Pack, there is also a contact form that will be submitted directly to LINK staff. This is where you'll find our blog space very soon.

Contact: Who's who at LINK and how to contact the team.

Social Networking: Facebook Page



We have recently launched a Facebook page that we hope will attract a wide range of 'friends'. The social networking site is a great way of keeping in touch with individuals and groups, and LINK's Facebook pages will feature details of all of our news and events as well as information on how to become a member. Find us on Facebook by searching for North Tyneside LINK.

Healthcare Commission and NHS Core Standards - Your Chance to Comment

In July 2004 the Government published Standards for Better Health. This document sets out 24 core standards that describe a minimum level of service that patients have the right to expect from local healthcare organisations.

The Healthcare Commission, who monitor these standards, are once again asking trusts to declare how they have performed against the core standards in 2008/09, by the deadline of 1 May 2009. As part of this process, trusts are responsible for inviting LINKs (amongst other organisations) to comment on their performance against any, or all of these standards.

Where does the LINK come in?

Because North Tyneside LINK is fully operational, we have the option of submitting our comments directly to trusts for inclusion in their declaration. While the exact deadlines vary between trusts, most will need these comments early to mid-April.

North Tyneside LINK is setting up a process to keep a record of issues that relate to each of the trusts and will, in future years, use this information as the basis for our comments. This year we have a problem in that the LINK hasn't been going long enough to have gathered any real evidence.

This fact has been recognised by the Healthcare Commission, who have suggested that LINKs might choose to simply co-ordinate the comments of their members and forward them to the individual trusts. The LINK team will be on hand to help individuals to write a comment that will pack a real punch and will get noticed by the Commission.


If you want to suggest a comment, a good place to start would be to look at the list of core standards available on our website at www.linknorthtyneside.org.uk/news-events.htm. The staff team will be happy to talk you through the process of writing an effective comment and will collate all of those by LINK members for submission to each trust. The Healthcare Commission have published a guide that offers advice to LINKs working with them - this can also be viewed on our website.

For more information telephone Dave Shaw on 0191 200 1429 or visit the News section of our website www.linknorthtyneside.org.uk

Contact Us

 Telephone: 0191 200 1429  Email: link@voda.org.uk

 Website: www.linknorthtyneside.org.uk

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