



Minding the gap

Tackling Health Inequalities in Yorkshire & the Humber

May 2010

LINKs Special

Welcome to our latest newsletter. This special edition focuses on what the programme has been doing to support the region's local involvement networks through a series of themed events.

What is a LINKs?

LINKs was set up in April 2008 when the Government announced that they were replacing Patient Forums with Local Involvement Networks (LINKs).

A LINK was set up in every council area that has a responsibility for health scrutiny & social care. LINKs encourage and support residents to get involved in how their care services are run. Volunteers for LINKs listen to people about what their needs are and also about what experiences that they have had (good or bad) in using their doctor's surgeries, hospitals or other National Health Services and Social Care provided by Local Authorities.

LINKs bring together people in the community, so that they can have their say about services and to help change lifestyles for the better.

Regional support for the LINKs

During the past year Minding the Gap has facilitated a series of events for LINKs and their local government and health service partners as part of a co-ordinated programme of regional support, in partnership with NHS Yorkshire & Humber, The Yorkshire & Humber Improvement Partnership and the Department of Health team at Government Office.

Some of these events provided updates and guidance around specific themes, whilst others promoted networking and information sharing. The programme for the year was decided at an initial event, held in June at the Queens Hotel in Leeds, when some 80 delegates shared experiences and took stock on progress. Issues discussed included how to raise public awareness of LINKs, how to prepare annual reports and establishing productive relationships with the NHS.

Delegates were asked to decide which the topics they felt should be included in future events and this feedback was used to develop the subsequent events programme. A copy of the full report of this event is available from Minding the Gap.



Minding the Gap

is the local government regional capacity building programme (health inequalities) for Yorkshire and Humber. It operates through a regional health collaborative supported by local and national partner agencies.

The programme is hosted by the City of Bradford MDC, with funding from the Department of Health and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

For further information about the project, or any of these items email: mindingthegap@bradford.gov.uk

Geoff Ainsley, Programme Manager

LINKs and the Local Authority Networking Event

Friday 9th October 2009

A significant difference between LINKs and the former Public & Patient involvement forums was the inclusion of social care in their remit. The purpose of this event was to provide an opportunity for LINKs members and hosts to learn a little more about the key issues in social care, including the developing Personalisation agenda and the role of the commissioner in social care settings.

The event was introduced by *Linda Phipps*, who also facilitated the day. Linda explained that the session provided an ideal opportunity for LINKs to meet with local authority officers and councillors, and the delegates enjoyed lively and positive discussions about their different roles, and how they could work together.

The first speaker was *John Gillespie*, of *In Control*, who brought the mysterious topic of Personalisation to life through his own very personal story. At root it is about empowering individuals and their families to access services that best suit their individual needs and preferences and to move away from the 'one size fits all' model of provision.

Tim Saunders, Manager of Commissioning for Adults at *Bradford Council* provided an insight into what social care is, and what services it includes. He explained that it is different to health services, involving different challenges. Mostly it is about providing for long term needs, and involves making connections around housing, support, work, leisure transport etc.

Tim spoke about the wide range of services involved and talked about the challenges around the move towards person centred care and the demographic changes, including an ageing population.

Linda Phipps spoke to delegates about the different roles of LINKs and Health scrutiny and suggested ways in which they could best work together to improve the impact that each could have on improving health outcomes for local people.

Linda posed a series of questions for delegates to consider. The discussion groups included LINKs members and hosts, councillors with a health scrutiny role and scrutiny support officers, health service representatives and commissioning managers. Many of the delegates were particularly appreciative of this opportunity for partners to discuss the issues together, and a number of issues were raised for inclusion in the programme for future events.



Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Support Programme Networking Event

Wednesday 16th December 2009

In December 2009, we returned to the Queens Hotel in Leeds. LINKs members came along to share some stories of good practice with fellow members. Our first story was from *Jonathan Appleton*, from *Hull CVS* of how they went about setting up their LINKs. Jonathan told us there are a total of 407 people involved in the Hull LINK with a staff of 4.

To help promote their work they have a newsletter and a website (www.hull-link.org) which they use for consultations and to advertise local events. Other areas of progress made by the programme are: a voice for the community and keeping ideas/dialogue going with local agencies.

Jonathan said that an important message is to focus on elements of addressing issues, researching local services and working together in sharing the workload.

Next we heard from *Melvyn Newton* at *Bradford LINK* about "Connect and make a difference in Keighley".

Bradford LINK held consultation events around plans for a new health and wellbeing centre in Keighley. As the LINK has close working relations with the PCT, both worked together to make sure that as many members of the public had the opportunity to have their say about what services could be offered. These events were

held in the Keighley Fields area with approximately 270 people taking part. The events were in local schools and community venues for easy access for the public to attend. To make sure that everyone had a chance to say what they wanted, the events were run as an "open space setting" which meant that everyone had the opportunity to take part and feel that they were listened to. A good partnership between the LINK and the PCT has enabled more people to have their say on health services thus empowering the community in having their voice heard.

After the stories, members moved into groups for discussions around what they are doing in their own LINK area and if there are any changes that they would like to see to help with better community engagement. Positive feedback from members included: ensure better engagement with PCTs and Local Authorities; differences between urban and rural areas for engagement; more leadership engagement from the host organisations as well as the chair; more public meetings with larger numbers of people.

The groups also discussed how members can use the media/press to get messages about LINKs out to the public; improvement engagement with PCTs around consultations, use of existing networks, focus on success stories and a programme of learning through the network events.



Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Support Programme LINKs / NHS Event

27th January 2010

Once again we returned to the Queens Hotel which is fast becoming the permanent venue for LINKs events. This event brought together LINKs members, Primary Care Trusts & Hospital Trusts to look at ways of how LINKs can work with commissioners in PCTs to improve health services.

The day started with a good example from Bradford of how LINKs and the NHS have worked together. *Melvyn* from *Bradford LINK* spoke about the excellent work that has been happening in Keighley through joint working with Bradford and Airedale NHS (the PCT).

Next *Anne Catchpole* from *Calderdale PCT* spoke on the role of commissioning in the PCT/NHS, and how effective working between LINKs and the PCT can lead to more sustainable improvements in health and well-being for all; a reduction in health inequalities in some communities as well as involving people in having their say about changes they would like to see.

Finally, *Sharron Ward*, from *NHS East Riding* spoke about a vision for better health and health service for East Riding.

As the morning progressed, members moved into group talks around their tables about how their own and patient's experiences can influence services. Members also discussed how LINKs can work with commissioners for improvement on services. At the end of the day some of the points of interest were: keeping in contact with the NHS/PCT; look at what works best in the community as different communities have different needs; set up two way information flows between LINKs and the NHS.



Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Support Programme

LINKs and Empowerment in Health and Wellbeing

Wednesday 3rd March 2010

This event was run differently from previous events. It was decided to hold an Open Space Session. LINKs members were asked to list a couple of topics they would like to discuss around Community Engagement and Empowerment. Members then moved into groups and were asked to hold an informal discussion around the topic area. Some great discussions were held, with members also being encouraged to move around the room and to join in on other discussions.

This new way of holding an event was met with great enthusiasm and good feedback around engagement. Members found that it was very positive to sit and discuss the issues that are happening within their LINKs as well as discussing new ways of engagement within the community. Topics discussed were: engagement with the learning disabled community, how can LINKs influence the big strategic local plans on health and wellbeing, how can we engage on the matter of ambulances at a regional level; how we reach marginalised individuals and communities.



Items of Interest..

New website to support LINKs and enabling people to easily find their LINK www.nhs.uk/links

A date for your diaries –

Tuesday 20 July 2010

Event –

**LINKs and Health Inequalities
Queens Hotel
Leeds**

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) Support Programme

Future Event Discussions:

Personalisation

Research by LINKs

Quality Accounts

The value of LINKs

Key contacts

Links Exchange
www.lx.nhs.uk

Department of Health
www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/PatientAndPublicinvolvement

NHS
www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/links/Pages/links-make-it-happen

Local Authority
www.direct.gov.uk/en/HealthAndWellBeing
www.communityvoicesonline.org

Care Quality Commission
<http://www.cqc.org.uk/>

NEWS...

Congratulations to Hull CVS who have been successful in securing the position to host the LINKs network for 2010/11.

Looking at ways in which we can work together to provide ongoing support to LINKs, their hosts and their commissioners over the coming year

Minding the Gap Contacts

Geoff Ainsley, Programme Manager
geoff.ainsley@bradford.gov.uk

Adele Ward, Project Officer
adele.ward@bradford.gov.uk

Kevin Ball, Project Support
Kevin.ball@bradford.gov.uk

The team can be contacted on 01274 432555