



Appendix 1

Brighton and Hove Local Involvement Network (BH LINK)

6 Month Report to Brighton and Hove Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

November 2010

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Background

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) were set up in England from April 2008 to give communities a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered.

Brighton and Hove Local Involvement Network (B&H LINK) is the independent health and adult social care watchdog for Brighton and Hove. It is an independent network of people and groups who want to help make social and health care better in the local area.

BH LINK helps citizens have their say and makes sure the patient/service users voice is listened to. B&H LINK is a statutory body with legal powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Key facts about LINKs

- Every local authority with a responsibility for social services has a statutory duty to make arrangements for LINK activity to take place
- Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) has a contract with Community Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) to 'host' Brighton and Hove LINK until March 2011
- Anyone who lives, works or receives services in Brighton and Hove can be part of Brighton and Hove LINK, as a LINK participant
- LINKs are independent and not part of Government or accountable to the Local Authority or NHS. However, they have a duty to report to the Secretary of State for Health through their Annual Report
- LINKs remit covers health and social care services in their area
- They have powers to enter and view services commissioned by the respective health and social care authorities, with the exception of children's services
- The remit of LINK includes independent providers of publicly funded services
- LINKs has powers to:
 - obtain information from health and social care commissioners
 - issue reports and make recommendations and expect a response within a specific timeframe
 - refer matters to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees concerned with health and social care services
 - enter certain services and view the care provided

Brighton and Hove LINK

Representation

The relationship between the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council and BH LINK is a complementary one and there is also a legal relationship with the HOSC in respect of referrals from the LINK. Robert Brown, MBE (LINK Chair) and Deputy, Mick Lister (LINK Steering Group member) are the LINK representatives on the HOSC.

The LINK now has a representative (Steve Lawless) on the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The LINK has a formal process for appointing representatives:

- providers etc. complete a representative form
- form is processed and discussed at the LINK monthly Steering Group meeting
- LINK participants/Steering Group (SG) members complete an application form
- applications are assessed by the LINK SG and representative is appointed
- providers are notified and representative is issued ID card
- representatives are offered training and support in their role
- where capacity allows representatives are briefed by the Host
- representatives feed back at the monthly SG meeting or via a simple feedback form

Please see Appendix 1 for a list of Boards the LINK has representation on.

LINK Governance

BH LINK produced its Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and Complaints Policy in 2009 although these have since been radically revised. In 2010 the following policies were also produced:

- Enter and View
- Environment
- Financial
- Confidentiality
- Media
- Engagement strategy
- Commissioning LINK work
- Ground rules for LINK events and meetings
- Service Level Agreement (between the Host and LINK)

All policies can be found at: www.bhlink.org/about-link/policies.phuse

Relationships

An effective relationship between the B&H Care Quality Commission (CQC) team (the regulator for health and social care) and the LINK has been established.

Outcome: attended CQC team meeting and working with CQC on care home project.

BH LINK has also lead on improving the joint working between the Sussex LINKs to improve partnership working and maximise resources.

Outcome: BH LINK is leading on the care home project (having developed the surveys and observation tools, briefing and research) which is also being used by East Sussex LINK. BH LINK is in regular communication with both Sussex LINK teams.

The Joint working meeting (including providers, local authority and scrutiny) is held quarterly and aims to:

- improve communication between all relevant organisations: NHS B&H, Providers, Local Authority Scrutiny and B&H LINK. And consequently duplication of work will be avoided.
- showcase LINK activity and promote good practice
- identify potential difficulties and challenges and take action before they escalate further

Outcome: providers and PCTs are developing individual statements/commitments to abide by the NHS Act 2006, the duty to involve and good involvement practice. LINK produced a brief paper on substantial variation/change to services. LINK is meeting with CEOs to discuss concerns that providers and commissioners do not always consult on service change.

Commissioning

The LINK now attends the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) meetings and the LINK has established relationships with primary care commissioners and the mental health commissioner.

Engagement and Participation

Over the past 6 months the increase in LINK participants has been 34%. BH LINK has 211 more LINK participants than the national average of LINK membership.

The LINK now has a 15 person strong team who have completed enter and view and safeguarding vulnerable adults training. They have also had enhanced criminal records bureau checks. The LINK newsletter is a popular publication and is circulated to many additional individuals and groups. Despite being a smaller city LINK our numbers of enter and view representatives is higher than most LINKs.

The Host has built capacity by participating in the Job Access Scheme to provide placements for young people and by working with volunteers in the LINK office. All volunteers have induction training and have clearly defined role descriptions.

The Host and LINK has met with at least 25 groups and charities in the city to promote the LINK and obtain health and adult social care issues in this period.

The LINK is working intensively to promote the involvement of children and young people. The LINK has also been actively involved in engaging with the Gypsy and Traveller community to identify key health issues.

The LINK has been on BBC Radio, community radio (Reverb) and quoted in the Argus numerous times during this period. We have also had articles or advertisements in community and residents newsletters and websites e.g. the Business Forum and the Economic Partnership in Brighton & Hove, Five Ways Magazine, Active for Life Directory, SECamb magazine, City News etc.

The LINK hosted its own health and wellbeing event in July which took place at the weekend and used an innovative approach to promote the LINK to people who do not usually attend community events. Although on a budget we negotiated with independent businesses to secure low budget or free resources – face painting for children, raffle prizes, lower cost massage and beauty sessions. This event was well attended, reaching over 200n people.

The LINK has attended numerous community events, had stands at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, AGM Take Heart (cardiac group), Walk-In Centre, spoken at meetings e.g. Whitehawk health meeting, BMECP meeting, novas Scarman, Hindu elders.

The LINK asked for views at two workshops etc. to feed into the White Paper consultation: Local democratic legitimacy. The LINK's submission to this consultation can be found at: www.bhlink.org/our-work/link-reports.phuse

LINK Activity

The LINK has worked on the following issues over the last 6 months:

Area
Medicine Wastage – produced 2 draft posters, 1 information flyer on medicine check-up, met with 10 pharmacies, 1 care home and working with Brighton University pharmacology students. Now working on Report and recommendations.
Hospital Discharge – made 8 recommendations and undertook 2 enter and view visits. Representation on the city-wide hospital discharge group
Mental Health – well attended LINK group, making recommendations and now working on a Time to Change anti-stigma activity.
Learning Disability – signed up to Mencap's Getting it Right and the Thumbs Up Campaigns, working with providers and groups to identify key issues. Leaflet produced on Link for people with learning disabilities.
Dentistry – produced a draft poster aimed at increasing take-up of NHS dentistry, x3 mystery shopper research, met with commissioners – looking at changes to special care dentistry as concerned the PCT has made changes to this service without consulting the LINK and public.
Public Toilets – working with relevant groups and individuals to obtain issues,

Area
planning a group meeting with local authority and contractor.
Dragons' Den – widely promoting this as way of promoting the LINK and increasing engagement with local communities (25.11.10)
Car Parking at RSCH – 1 enter and view visit and survey undertaken at RSCH, planning another visit.
Care Home –leading on a project with East Sussex and CQC to look at nutrition in care homes. Produced briefing, research and survey and observation tool.
Children and Young People – interim project worker (with expertise in this area) liaising with CYP groups and children's centres to increase issues and sign-ups. Working with the Youth Council to secure young people on the Link Steering Group.
Breast Feeding – promoting breast feeding and identifying key issues for new mums, particularly in areas where there are low rates – 1 recommendation to PCT.
Health Promotion (HP) – met with key HP teams to ensure the LINK provides information on issues such as cancer prevention, sexual health, alcohol, mental health and wellbeing etc.
Recommendation to HOSC – free swimming funding should continue for over 60s
Misc: LINK monthly newsletter receives much praise from its readers and in addition to LINK information and health and adult social care news it also contains key information health promotion information. The LINK has also been short listed for a public service award.

Ongoing/Future

- Promote LINK more widely in B&H
- Transition to Local Health Watch
- Transition to GP consortia
- Submission to the White Paper Information Revolution Consultation
- Gypsy and Traveller project with GP practices

Key Figures

Performance Measure	BH LINK
Number of LINK Members/ Participants	698
Number of active LINK Members/ Participants	42
Number of Citizens engaged	979
Number of Requests for Information made	158
Number of Enter & View Visits undertaken	3
Number of Reports and Recommendations made	14
Number of Referrals made to OSC	1
Number of Reports/ Referrals resulting in Service Change	2

Contact the LINK:

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