



LINKUP

Issue 5

The newsletter for
Gloucestershire Local
Involvement Network (LINK)

Welcome

Welcome to Issue 5 of LINKUP. This is the final LINKUP in the project's last year – a year of great change. As we move into the transition year of LINK, we will keep you up to date as it evolves into a new consumer champion called **Local HealthWatch**.

Local HealthWatch will build on the good work that LINKs have undertaken over the last three years and combine this with additional responsibilities. These include the provision of evidence to the GP Consortia to inform the commissioning process and possible roles around health complaints advocacy and better access to information and choice on services.

What is a LINK?

A Local Involvement Network (LINK) is about listening to and gathering your views on local health and social care services. The LINK allows people to help influence, improve or change the way these services are planned and delivered. Anyone can join and have their say.

Latest news



● LINK member feedback survey

LINK will soon be sending out and making available its first member feedback survey. Part of a three-year external evaluation of the project, it will ensure that as we move into Local HealthWatch we are fully engaged with people who want to know more about what we do and that we understand how people wish to be communicated with. Keep an eye on the website for more information.

● BME event

Gloucestershire LINK held its first dedicated county BME event at the Friendship Café, Barton Street,

Gloucester on the 30th March. The event, delivered with the help of our Gloucestershire Community Agents, involved a cross section of BME communities, brought together to gather views and experiences on access to services and any possible cultural/language barriers to engagement.

● Event for members with a learning disability

LINK hosted its second event for members with a learning disability, giving feedback from the commissioners and providers on the previous event report submitted. Members also gave views on their experiences of hospital outpatient services, as LINK is working with the Hospitals Trust to help to improve these services locally.



Jane and Val at learning disability event

● Training events

The last of this year's members' events will take place in April with a talk from the South West Strategic Health Authority about the implications of the forthcoming Health and Social Care Bill, the proposed role of the new GP Consortia and how Gloucestershire LINK fits into this ever-changing landscape. The usual discussion groups will follow, which provide valuable feedback and ideas.

● University of Gloucestershire

As part of our ongoing engagement programme, we delivered a talk to Social Care students and lecturers at the University of Gloucestershire. The session included a talk about LINK, followed by a highly productive question and answer session.

● Young people

As well as the youth portal on our website, we now have our own dedicated page on 'What Now Glos', a website aimed specifically at young people in Gloucestershire. This will encourage younger people to communicate their views and help us improve services for them.

Latest news continued...



Public events
We recently finished the third phase of our public events, having visited seven different locations in the county (St Paul's in Cheltenham, Bishop's Cleeve, Chipping Campden, Newent, Quedgeley, Fairford, and Stonehouse), gathering more of your views on health and social care services in your area. These views have been shared with the commissioners and providers and Care Quality Commission as regulator and will inform the work of our task groups. We are also reviewing the effectiveness of the public

engagement activity we have undertaken this year. The results will form the basis of our engagement in the transition year. Our stands in shopping arcades have proved extremely effective and generated the most comments this year.



Diary

- Wednesday 13th April 2011**
Members' event:
Implications of the Health and Social Care Bill and role of GP Consortia
The Farmers Club, Agriculture House, Tewkesbury Road, Gloucester, GL2 9AS
5pm – 7.30pm
- Thursday 6th May 2011**
LINK stand at Beechwood Shopping Arcade, Cheltenham
10am – 3pm
- Friday 27th May 2011**
LINK stand at Merrywalks Shopping Centre, Stroud
10am – 3pm
- Thursday 16th June 2011**
Gloucestershire LINK Annual General Meeting
Keynote speaker Ian Biggs, SW Regional Director of the CQC, plus the presentation of the LINK Annual Report for 2010/11
Gloucester Rugby Club, Kingsholm Road, Gloucester
5pm – 7pm

What has Gloucestershire LINK been doing?

- 'Enter and View'**
LINK carried out its first 'Enter and View' visits to the Emergency Department of Gloucester Royal Hospital. These visits are designed to help us obtain information about issues raised by the public, when we have not been able to acquire it in any other way. Information gathered has been included in a report sent to the commissioners and providers for response.
- Review survey of administration of medicines**
LINK undertook its first online survey to review the administration of medicines in local acute hospitals. As part of a planned review, it confirmed that there had been a considerable improvement in practice.

- Reports**
Reports on the Discharge Pathway, Access to Podiatry Services, Access to Dentistry and Podiatry from Care Homes, and a report from the second event we held for members with a learning disability are complete and have been sent to the commissioners and providers for response.
- National Learning Set**
We have been working with the Care Quality Commission over the past six months on a piece of work about how LINKs across the country can maintain and improve their communication with the CQC. The protocol developed by Gloucestershire LINK is now being taken up as a 'best practice' model to be used nationally.

- LINK task and focus groups**
Task groups on Access to Patient Transport Services, Access to Services for Self Harm and Suicide Prevention, and Access to Services by the Visually Impaired are underway, looking at patient pathways and policies. Reports will be written on completion of this work. A focus group on Fibromyalgia was held and the results of a survey of members who attended will form part of the report to go to commissioners.
- Training programme**
LINK delivered its planned training programme for the year, which included the Carers Implementation Strategy, Fairer Charging Policy, Mental Capacity Act, and an update on the Putting People First Programme – 'Your Circle'.

Meet the support team

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council is the host organisation for the Gloucestershire LINK. Its role is to support and enable the LINK to carry out its work. The LINK team can be contacted on 01452 528491 or you can email them direct.



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We look forward to hearing from you.

Member's support

"I joined Gloucestershire LINK because I wanted to represent people like me who have a visual impairment and make sure services meant for us are representative of what we truly want and need."



Gerald Tween,
LINK member

The big issues

● Transition from LINK into Local HealthWatch

Gloucestershire LINK will be receiving slightly reduced funding for 2011/12 from Gloucestershire County Council to carry out work in this transition year. This reduction is considerably less than many of our South West LINK counterparts.

● Health and Social Care Bill

This Bill is going through the committee stage in the House of Commons and a number of amendments are being made to it. Further details will be made available when we know more.

● Transforming Community Services

A number of LINK members were involved in the county stakeholder briefing sessions held by NHS Gloucestershire and raised several concerns relating to the setup of this Social Enterprise Trust.

● Care Quality Commission

Gloucestershire LINK continues to work closely with the CQC both on local and national issues.



● What happens to your comments?

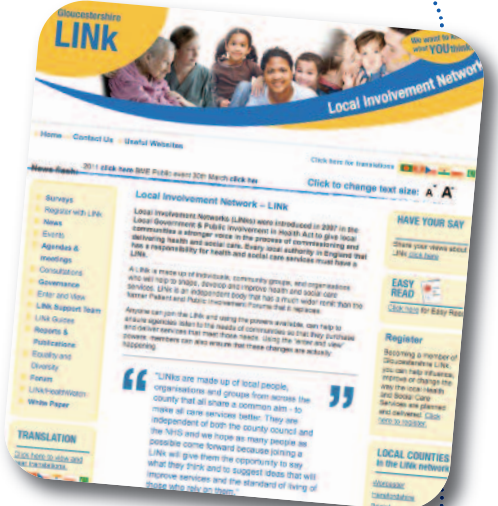
People often ask us what happens to the comments and views they give us. The LINK gathers all comments and concerns and feeds them back to the commissioners and providers. As a result of this, services are looked at and improvements or changes made. Where appropriate, these comments and concerns are taken to the Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee or sent to the Care Quality Commission. They are also used to help inform the LINK workplan.

Website news

In the transition year, we feel that we should make better use of the LINK website and other social networking opportunities.

With this in mind, we are working with members who have IT experience and our website providers, to ensure that we use the most effective ways to communicate with you, giving the right amounts of information at the right time, but also keeping the site user-friendly and accessible.

Watch this space!





What does LINK do?

- Listens to what people say about their local health and social care services
- Asks the people who run the services about what they offer and their standards of care
- Looks into issues of concern
- Visits services that are not working well
- Writes reports on findings about local services
- Has a say when new services are being planned and developed
- Refers issues to relevant agencies and the Health, Community & Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Join the LINK

There are a number of benefits to becoming involved with the LINK. They include:

- helping to influence those who make decisions about new or existing health and social care services
- giving communities a stronger voice
- highlighting neglected ideas or issues.

For more information, please contact Gloucestershire LINK on 01452 528491 or email gloslink@grcc.org.uk.



The LINK lowdown

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) were introduced in 2008 in the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act to give local communities a stronger voice in the process of commissioning and delivering health and social care.

Every local authority in England that has a responsibility for health and social care services must have a LINK.

A LINK is made up of individuals, community groups and organisations who help to influence, improve or change the way in which health and social care services are planned and delivered.

Accessible to all

We can produce this document in alternative formats such as Braille, Easy Read, large print and other languages. If you would like a copy in another format, please telephone 01452 528491.

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