

LINK

**MAKE IT
HAPPEN!**

About LINKs

How you can help make
health and social care
services better

Easy read



This is an Easy Read version of a booklet called **Help build a better health and social care service.**



It is about how **you** can have **your** say about how health and social care services are run in your area.



When we say services in this booklet, we mean **health and social care services.**



When we say **LINK** we mean the **Local Involvement Network.**



You may like to have someone to support you when you look at this booklet.



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What is a LINK?

LINK is short for Local Involvement Network.



LINKs are groups of local people and organisations that work together to make local health and social care services better.

Anyone can get involved in their local LINK.



LINKs are a way of:

- ✓ giving you a say in how services are run



- ✓ helping people who work in health and social care services to do their jobs better



- ✓ sharing ideas for new and better services



- ✓ making sure change happens.



Your local LINK wants to know:

- what you like about health and social care services in your area
- what you do not like about services in your area
- your ideas for making services better



- your ideas for change.



Your LINK can help make big and small changes to services. It works with the people who plan and run services to help make the services better.



This booklet tells you more about LINKs and how you can have your say.



What can your LINK do?

Your local LINK can:

- ✓ ask local people what they think of local health and social care services



- ✓ give you a chance to share your ideas for better services with people who work in health and social care



- ✓ look at services that matter to local people



- ✓ talk to the people who plan and run services about what the LINK thinks they should be doing



- ✓ ask for information about services and get answers.



Your local LINK can also:

✓ visit services to check that they are working well



✓ tell the local council if things do not seem to be going well.



An example

Here is an example of how a LINK helped patients and their doctors.

Some people told their LINK they would like their doctors' surgery to be open at times that suited patients better.



The doctors said they would like to open during the evening and at weekends but they did not have enough staff or money.

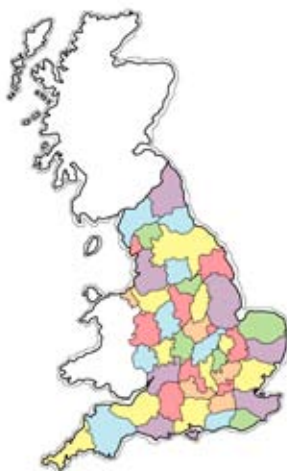


To help find an answer to this problem the LINK:

- helped the surgery to find out what opening hours would be best for patients by asking local people



- asked LINKs in other areas what they have done about the same problem.



The LINK found out that people who work would like more early morning appointments so they would not be late for work.

So the doctors decided to close the surgery one afternoon a week so that they could use the saved time to open earlier in the mornings.

The surgery also started a new service. They now ring a patient back so the patient can get some advice from a doctor on the telephone rather than visit the surgery.



Who can join a LINK?

Anyone can join a LINK.

This means anyone who wants to make sure that services listen to the needs of local people, including:

- patients



- carers



- people who use services



- community leaders



- charities.



Other people who can join a LINK include:

- faith groups



- residents' associations



- youth councils



- minority ethnic organisations



- businesses.



Your LINK is interested in what everyone thinks. It will treat everyone equally.



Why get involved?

LINks are important to you and your family. If you get involved you can:

- ✓ get services to think about the things that really matter to you



- ✓ have a way of talking to the people who plan and run health and care services



- ✓ help local people to be heard



- ✓ help services give better care.



The more people that get involved in your LINK, the stronger it will be.



How much time will it take?

It is easy to work with your local LINK. It is up to you how much time you spend.

✓ You could just tell your LINK what you think when they come to you to ask questions. This would not take very much time at all.



✓ Or you could get more involved and do things like:

- tell the LINK about ideas you have



- tell the LINK about problems you know about



- help find answers to problems



- talk to service providers



- be part of a working group.



You could choose to do things like:

- go to meetings about things that interest you



- join an online group to look at particular problems



- visit services to check how they are run.



Who runs a LINK?

Your LINK is independent. It is run by the people who belong to it.

Your council has been given money to pay for your LINK. But it is up to the LINK to decide:



- ✓ how to spend the money



- ✓ how to run the LINK



- ✓ what are the most important things for the LINK to work on.



Who supports your LINK?

Your local council pays another organisation to support your LINK.

This organisation does things like:

- tell local people about what the LINK does
- tell people how to get involved
- support the LINK in its offices



- look after the LINK's money



- keep a record of what the LINK does



- help find out what local people think.



LINKs and the law

LINKs can:

- ask health and social care commissioners for information. The commissioners must then give them an answer by law. Commissioners buy the health and social services in your area.



- recommend what services should do and the commissioners must reply



- tell the local council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee if things are not going well



- visit some services and check that they are giving good care.



More information

If you want to join your local LINK or find out more, please visit

www.direct.gov.uk/localinvolvementnetworks



To find out what is happening in your area, contact your local borough or county council. Their number is in the phone book. Or visit their website.



If you want more copies of **this booklet**, or a copy of the longer booklet **Help build a better health and social care service** you can:

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