

National changes to Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)

Under the Health and Social Care Bill which is currently going through parliament, Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) - including Liverpool LINK - will become Local HealthWatch organisations in October 2012.

Local Authorities will be under a duty to ensure that there is an effective and efficient local HealthWatch in their area and in Liverpool discussions are currently taking place between LINK and Liverpool City Council to make arrangements to ensure a smooth transition.

HealthWatch will be an independent consumer champion for the public both locally and nationally, aiming to promote better outcomes in health for all and in social care for adults.

If the Health and Social Care Bill goes through as originally planned, Liverpool HealthWatch will be able to:

1. Help shape the planning and delivery of local health and social care services - a continuation of Liverpool LINK's current role;
2. Provide information and advice to help people make choices about health and care services;
3. Help to advocate for people making a complaint about health or adult care services.

Your Views Matter to LINK!

If you have information or views about a service that you feel could benefit from LINK feedback **Please complete and return the enclosed Patient Experience Survey** and return it to us by Freepost. No stamp is required, and the equality and diversity form on the back is anonymous so as to ensure that services cater to the needs of everyone.

LIVERPOOL LINK

News October 2011

Chair's Welcome

Dear LINK Members.
Welcome to the latest edition of the Liverpool LINK Newsletter.



We are all still working hard on the transition from LINKs to Healthwatch, although things are slow moving whilst waiting for the Government to issue guidelines. We need these guidelines in order to change our Governance and so move to Healthwatch. This is also an uncertain time for our support staff who are unsure about their future, but as usual they are handling everything with the utmost professionalism.

On a brighter note, congratulations to Laura Yallop (one of our support team) and her partner Mike on the arrival of their new son James. Also many congratulations to my old friend John Roberts who was deservedly awarded the title of Quality Champion by Liverpool Primary Care Trust at their recent annual general meeting. This was in recognition for the work John does for diabetes.

I would like to thank the Core Group and all the volunteers who are working so hard on the transition, on top of all the other work they are still doing for LINK.

Since the last newsletter I have had two brilliant experiences as the chair of Liverpool LINK, first of all I was invited by our host organisation, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services, to witness the official opening of their building. I had the great pleasure of meeting H.R.H Prince Edward the Duke of Wessex. Then in June I was fortunate to receive an invitation to a garden party at Buckingham Palace where I met HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, and was able to tell him something about the work we are doing at Liverpool LINK.

Finally I know it is early, but may I take this opportunity to wish all members a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

We are now looking for more active members to get involved in the work of Liverpool LINK to be part of the new Patient Experience Teams who will by arrangement visit hospitals, day centres, GPs etc to gather people's views about services, both GOOD OR BAD experiences. So if you can spare an hour or two why not give it a try, please contact Claire or Andrew at the LINK office for details of how you can help.

'Building on our success'

To enable Liverpool LINK to prepare for the transition to HealthWatch, we set up a research group in early 2011 which has undertaken a number of transitional activities throughout the year.

This 'LINK to HealthWatch' Group also worked with the support team staff and Core Group to conduct an exercise looking at strengths and weaknesses of LINK and analyse various aspects of LINK operations.

The aim of this exercise was to ensure that Liverpool LINK could maintain and build on its foundation in terms of what was working well, i.e identified areas of work, governance and training, roles and representation, engagement activities, marketing and communication that would need to be revisited to prepare towards 2012, the launch of Liverpool Local HealthWatch.

The key strengths that were identified during this exercise were as follows: -

Strengths:

- Diverse membership
- Diverse and experienced Core Group and authorised LINK participants
- Trained volunteers
- Clear role descriptions and functions
- CRB checked and trained enter and view volunteers
- Health and Social Care Ambassadors placed with each Trust
- A variety of roles and functions reaching grass root communities
- Strong governance with clear values
- An evidence based approach to the work
- Respected and valued reports
- Representation at all levels within the current structures
- The added value of being with a Host organisation
- Widely marketed, recognised branding, newsletter and website
- Delivering a variety of different communication and engagement methods
- Working with other LINKs across the Merseyside area

Liverpool LINK will ensure that we make the most of these strengths throughout the transition to HealthWatch.

We will also provide further information regarding HealthWatch development to the public as soon as we have access to national guidance and local strategic plans.

Liverpool LINK Gets Pathfinder Status

The government made a commitment in Liberating the NHS: Legislative framework and next steps to invite local authorities in partnership with their Local Involvement Network (LINK) and host organisations to develop HealthWatch Pathfinders.

HealthWatch Pathfinders will be a crucial part of the work to prepare for the establishment of HealthWatch from Oct 2012. Liverpool City Council is already supportive of this development and are themselves part of the Early Implementer Network for Health and Wellbeing Boards.

On Wednesday 3rd August it was announced that seventy-five Local Involvement Networks had received the HealthWatch Pathfinder status, and Liverpool LINK was one of them.

This will mean that Liverpool LINK is able to build on its foundation and will pioneer plans ahead of the full establishment of local HealthWatch across the country, expected in October 2012. HealthWatch Pathfinders through learning together will share their experiences so as to influence the establishment of HealthWatch throughout England.

Liverpool LINK will continue to champion the views and experiences of local people and work towards promoting the integration of local services to improve the choice for patients through advice and access to information.



Dorcas & Stella - valued LINK volunteers

Volunteer with us!

Liverpool LINK relies on people who are using Liverpool health and social care services telling us what has been good, bad or indifferent about their hospitals, GPs, dentists, care homes and pharmacies, and how they think these services could be improved. We need your help to get this right!

If you would like to get involved, please contact a member of the LINK Support Team. You can give as much or as little time as you wish. Training and out of pocket expenses will be given.

To keep up to date and to find out more about our work, contact us on:

Tel. 0151 227 5177

Email info@liverpoollink.org.uk

Web www.liverpoollink.org

'Enter and Views' held in 2011

Our volunteers have made 4 'enter and view' visits since the last newsletter in February. These were to the Walton centre in May, Redholme Nursing Home in June, Aintree University Hospital in July and Alder Hey in August. LINK member Jacqui Jones reports:

Enter and View visits are one way of helping authorised LINK members who have undergone training and CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) checks to develop positive relationships with care providers and to start building a picture of the work of each provider, with a view to making constructive contributions in a range of ways. The visits allows volunteers to conduct a fact-finding exercise, highlighting good practice and positive outcomes as well as asking questions about any potential changes or improvements that could be made and making recommendations where appropriate.

"The first Enter and View I participated in was at the Liverpool Women's Hospital. I was particularly interested, not only due to the fact that I am female but also because not being a Liverpool resident I had never accessed the service which I had heard a great deal about from colleagues and young women through my 'youth work' role.

As a "woman of a certain age" I have spent much time in Gynaecology departments in other hospitals which gave me a basis for comparison although I would see more behind the scenes and from a different perspective.

On arrival we discovered our attendance actually followed a visit by Government Ministers earlier in the day which may have played a part in the preparation for our visit but we most certainly did not get the impression that our visit was any less important.

Staff were really welcoming and seemed relaxed and confident about the standard of care at the Hospital. We were fortunate to be approached by a patient and her husband who could not sing their praises highly enough.

The LINK is about local people having a voice to express concerns about health and social care thus in Enter & View visits we should be particularly looking out for how information is shared with patients and how patients are involved and consulted about the hospital's service. The visit was very informative and I was impressed by systems established to get feedback from patients e.g. paper version and touch screen questionnaires. Notice boards gave clear info on how particular Wards were achieving their targets.

Although we are not actually there to "inspect" we are there to judge the standard of provision and make comments relating to how we feel a service could be improved. As is the purpose of these visits we gained an insight which will help in our contribution to Quality Accounts and after each Enter & View a report is written and made available on our website which draws attention not only to any matters of concern but also highlights the observations which impressed.



Since my E & V at Liverpool Women's Hospital I have completed two further visits and would recommend the take up of this opportunity as an interesting and enjoyable experience". – Jacqui Jones, one of our Enter & View volunteers.

John Roberts wins Quality Champion award at Liverpool PCT AGM

"Wining this award was a big surprise and an honour. It shows you that other people have appreciated the time and commitment I have given to supporting people with diabetes. I have been involved with diabetes care for many years working with such organisations as the Community Health Council, Patient and Public involvement with Health, Liverpool LINKs and Merseyside Diabetes Support Group.

The award is for my work around supporting people with diabetes and my involvement with Liverpool PCT. I have been involved with the Diabetes LIT (Local Implementation Team) as a patient rep for a number of years and seen many changes within diabetes. I was also involved with the Diabetes Register Group, the Multicultural Diabetes forum, the Diabetes Reference group and I was involved with working for NICE on their Type 2 Diabetes Guidelines. With the all the changes happening within the NHS I think we need more Quality Champions to speak out for patients".



If you would like a copy of this information in another language or format, including large print or Easy Read, please let us know.

For information about how you can get involved in Liverpool LINK, contact:

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