

KENT LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINK)

Supported by Kent & Medway Networks



Kent

Update 22 August 2008

Update on progress in setting up a Kent LINK

In July Kent & Medway Networks Ltd (KMN) – a not for profit organisation – was awarded a three year contract to support the setting up and development of the Kent Local Involvement Network (LINK).

LINKs were introduced by Parliament in 2007 to provide a means for people to have a stronger voice in the planning, delivery and review of health and social care services. For the first time, LINKs aim to provide a seamless look at health and social care services.

The LINK has been armed with powers to:

- obtain information
- seek people's views
- convey those views to the decision-makers and get answers
- access to view services at first hand
- review services and submit reports and get answers

What sets the LINK apart from other similar bodies is that it is NOT

- a committee that speaks for the community – the LINK is about having structures / processes that enable local people to become involved and for their voices to be heard. It is recognised that it is not sufficient to tell people that they have a right to become involved – often they need support and some structure or grouping that may help them to contribute to:
 - the process of deciding what health and social care services should be provided to meet the needs of the population of Kent
 - influencing the commissioning of health and social care services
 - improving/developing services based on the recent experiences of those using such services
 - the monitoring / review of those services that the LINK feels should warrant further enquiry / investigation
- a complaints body
- a network that duplicates other networks – it aims to work with those who are already working with individuals and community groups – the LINK's added value is that of enabling those groups to join with others and, as appropriate, use the statutory powers of the LINK to get their voices heard
- a method for performance managing health and social care service – there are already professional bodies set up for those purpose. The LINK can however contribute the experience of users of those services in that process
- a party political organisation – the LINK is independent and is not a vehicle for any party political or pressure group activity

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Parliament laid down that LINKs should become effective from April 2008 and set in place some transitional powers to help with the set up of LINK processes / structures.

In Kent such a transitional group was set up and devised a model for the embryonic Kent LINK – attached is a graphic representation of that model. At the heart of this is a “Governance Hub” which would be a small strategic / co-ordinating group made up of a balanced membership, including individuals from voluntary / independent / community sector, with appropriate skills that would ensure the integrity and credibility of the LINK. This could be compared with the role to that of Trustees of a Charity or a School Governor.

Establishment of a Governance Hub achieves the separation of the LINK governance roles from engagement activities. Although the hub would be responsible, together with the Host, for ensuring that engagement structures / processes are put in place the hub would not participate directly in engagement activities. So it would not be the Group for people to get on to exert pressure to get their views heard - the LINK’s network of networks would ensure that it was not always the loudest voice that gets heard but that everyone should get an equal chance to contribute and be helped if they have difficulty in getting involved.

The hub’s roles would include:

- Strategic overseeing / planning the development of the LINK
- Developing the LINK’s governance arrangements
- Ensuring that the LINK’s governance arrangements are consulted upon and agreed by the Kent community
- Ensuring that the rules of governance are complied with in respect of all LINK activities
- Ensuring that the LINK’s communications / public relations (PR) with partners and media are effective
- Ensuring that the LINK work programme reflects the needs of the community of Kent
- Monitoring progress of the LINK work programme, as previously approved by the public of Kent
- Project Management - managing projects
- Setting up engagement structures, eg the network of networks, programme of community events
- Finance – overseeing LINK expenditure and financial reporting
- Ensuring standards of equality, fairness and diversity in relation to all LINK activities are achieved
- Operating in an open and transparent way

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- Being accountable to the LINK (through its engagement mechanisms)
 - Contributing to the performance management of the Host (KMN)
 - Ensuring that the information needs of the LINK are met
 - Referring LINK reports to appropriate bodies and ensuring responses are received and fed back to the LINK

We have consulted with the Transitional Group on how the Governance Hub may be constituted and selected. Based on these discussions we are currently drawing up a terms of reference for the governance hub and skills / person / role profiles and will be advertising very shortly for these positions – they will be voluntary positions but with expenses paid. We will keep you informed.

LINK is a truly exciting opportunity for everyone to get involved at whatever level – it is a new concept which does need to be set up very carefully in order to realise its full potential.

Our current timetable provides for a LINK launch in October / November, which would include three LINK events across Kent and the launch of the LINK website.

Other activities we are currently working on are:

- The appointment of staff to support the LINK. Interviews for two LINK Administrators are in process and we will be giving details of the successful candidates in the next Bulletin / Update
- Interviews for three LINK Development Workers (LDWs) will be held on 27/28 August. The LINK Development Workers will be situated in East, Mid and West Kent and an important part of their job will be to make contact with community and voluntary sector groups and those individuals / groups that have traditional not become involved – they are key to our aim of setting up structures / groups throughout Kent where local people will find a way to contribute to the task of improving our health and social care services
- Drafting Governance rules for the LINK to put to local people at the October/November events
- Drafting a communications policy for the LINK to consider
- Updating our database to aid communication with local people and to help us ensure that we are involving a diverse range of people across Kent – we will have a diversity monitoring tool to aid in this and to provide evidence that more people are becoming involved and that they have effected change
- Developing the LINK web site

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Although things might not appear to be happening as quickly as everyone would like - you can see from the above that a lot of infrastructure is being prepared to be put in place to enable the Kent LINK to become an effective mechanism for the people of Kent to effect change and to help improve its health and social care services.

YOU CAN HELP BY STAYING INTERESTED, LETTING EVERYONE YOU KNOW ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING AND ASKING THEM TO REGISTER THEIR INTEREST AND CONTACT US AT:

info@kmn.co.uk or tel 01303 297050

The Medway LINK

KMN has also been awarded the contract to support the Medway LINK. Graham Hills, Operational Director for KMN said today;

“This provides an excellent opportunity to enable the two LINKs to benefit from being served by the same support organisation in an area which has much in common and shares services across boundaries”
