



**Kent LINK External Representatives
Meeting Report**

Name of LINK Representative	Cate Jackson and Jane Cooper
Name of External Organisation	Kent Brokerage Network
Name of External Group	
Name of lead contact of External Group	Des Sowerby
Date of Meeting	12 May 2011
Venue of Meeting	International House, Ashford
Summary of Meeting (If appropriate attach papers)	<p>Notes of the meeting recorded by Des Sowerby who was also in the chair:</p> <p>Note from Kent Brokerage Network meeting 12 May 2011.</p> <p>Present: Peter Bland, Birgitte Perdos (Skillnet Group); Julie Chalmers-Stevens (Blackthorne Trust); Sarah McKenna (E Kent Mencap); Jane Cooper, Cate Jackson (Kent LINK); Jeff Smith (JCS Consulting); Chris Beaching , Adam Williams (Tunbridge Wells Mental Resource Centre); Paul Hammocks, Venetia Gibbs, Paula Guy, Katy Bell (Signpost Kent), Rose Hedley (Shaw Trust); Des Sowerby (National Brokerage Network).</p> <p>Agenda: The membership of the group is changing, and we did not have a pre-established agenda. From the introductory comments, issues raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Brokerage? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does it include areas such as Long Term Health Conditions? • What is peer Brokerage? • Any more feedback from the LD pilots in East Kent?

- What is (the purpose of) the Kent Brokerage Network?

Discussion:

1. Des attempted a rambling history of where Brokerage had come from, and how the Kent group had formed.
 - Many strands led to the current policy of personalisation. For example, in learning disability and physical disability the normalisation ideas from the 1960's; ordinary life / closing institutions / Centres for Independent Living of the 1970's and 80's; Direct Payments from 1996; In Control from 2002; Local Area Coordination (in the UK from the early 2000's); and so on
 - Kent Social Services had linked with these movements quite early. We were an early member of In Control, and had completed a RAS (Resource Allocation System = 'the money' and how to allocate individual budgets) which was agreed in principle by Social Services Executive Group in January 2007. Links were built with the National Brokerage Network and Brokerage training started in 2007.
 - By 2009 the brakes had been put on by Social Services, partly concerned that the financial crisis would lead to massive cuts in funding and wanting to reorganise / slim down early so they could manage whatever the future brought as well as possible. Developments towards Self Directed Support were very cautious, and for example a limited plan to pilot Brokerage was introduced. These pilot projects were limited in what they could do, essentially being given contracts by Care Managers to do specific work with individuals.
 - The National Brokerage Network (NBN) had grown out of the government's 13 pilots of aspects of In Control in 2004-5. One of these pilots, in Essex, was delivered by Real Life Trust who worked out systems of costing Brokerage and support, led by Tony Phillips who formed the NBN in 2005 to make the learning from these pilots available freely to everyone. The NBN developed different sorts of training, and began to develop standards etc.

- Personalisation / Self-Directed Support / Personal Budgets etc. are still very much government policy. But they are hardly being implemented locally, or by local authorities. This (in my view) is partly due to self interest in not wanting to lose control, and partly due to the cuts being imposed on local authorities. So the context that was supposed to exist to enable Brokerage to work well has hardly developed.
- The National Brokerage Network, and many other people, believes that the skills and attitudes of Brokers will be needed urgently very soon, as current local systems become less and less able to operate well. So we are keen to find ways to collaborate and support each other during this most difficult period. We have no funding and are essentially a group of enthusiasts who are trying to work out the most effective way of supporting this collaborative approach, as well as providing an authoritative national voice to try to influence how things develop and to make sure that Brokerage is understood and considered in developments and policy. We are reaching the end of a period of exploration of different options and are about to re-launch ourselves. This will probably include seeking a membership fee to build a representative voice for Brokerage, as well as offering things in local areas.
- In London and the South East we have a large development of Brokerage. Kent is invited to be part of a hub with London, which will include things like joint learning networks, seminars, different sorts of training, forms of support and supervision. Final details depend on what people want / want to pay for.

2. What is the Kent Brokerage Network for?

- Some Kent Brokers came to the 2010 AGM of the NBN in Birmingham. They found it useful and interesting, but too far to travel on a regular basis. We agreed to have 3 meetings in Kent to work out what we wanted to do, and I agreed to facilitate these until we worked out a local arrangement. I think we have now had 6 meetings, and the membership has changed with the closure of the

East Kent projects (mainly learning disability) and the growth of Signpost Kent (mainly mental health and peer brokers).

- So the purpose is 'whatever we want it to be' – whatever is useful and practical. At the moment this seems to include the opportunity:
 - to meet, particularly valuable as we are a dispersed group, a number of people being independent, and not acknowledged much by "the system"
 - to grapple with dilemmas about our purpose and our existence, as little Brokerage work is being made available
 - to think about how to retain and develop our skills. Many of us have had initial training which would benefit both from supervised practice experience as well as on-going learning. Some people (eg mental health peer brokers) have not found the NDTi training particularly appropriate and work is underway to develop better training systems
 - to become more influential in Kent, for example building links and influencing policy
 - to become more known about in Kent – working out ways to get information about Brokerage and Brokers to people who might want to use them
 - to collaborate – perhaps on things like building good information advice and guidance (IAG) systems locally
 - to add our voice to building a more influential national voice, perhaps through membership of the National Brokerage Network.

3. The discussion ranged over the above issues, and more. Things I drew from the discussion include:

- A concern to raise the profile of Brokerage in Kent. Vignettes were presented of KCC managers and others saying that Brokerage doesn't exist in Kent. We need to engage constructively to establish the place and the

choice of Brokerage. This will involve demonstrating its value.

- Kent LINK offered its communications links through its work with 968 organisations.

4. **Decision**

We were running close to the end of our meeting, and decided:

- We do want to meet again. We decided on July . Katy will make the arrangements and let us know.
- We want to consider how we can become more established as a group. We will think about ways of doing this and decide at the next meeting. Please do think in advance about what sort of organisation you would like the network to be.
 - Des will come with an outline about what closer links/ membership of the NBN would involve
 - Jeff will look into what becoming a Community Interest Company would involve
 - Chris and others had suggested how we could set up a website.
- There was broad agreement that we need to communicate more between meetings. Des will send an email containing all e-addresses so people can contact each other.

Des Sowerby
18 May 2011

Recommendations / Actions eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items for LINK bulletin • Items for individual interest group • Issue to Priorities Panel / Governors' Group 	<p>Neither of us (Cate Jackson and Jane Cooper) could establish exactly why Kent LINK had been asked to provide two external representatives. We did ask the question, to no avail.</p> <p>The group appears to be a disparate group of people headed by Des Sowerby and supported (and funded for meetings) by Katy Bell of Signpost Kent.</p> <p>With the exception of the two of us, the entire group appeared to be commercial Brokers, whether or not they were part of a named organisation. The main thrust of their discussions was about Kent County Council (KCC) and getting paid work.</p> <p>There was great annoyance from the group that the East Kent Brokerage Project, under Naomi Milldine, had faded and finished and that all communication from KCC had stopped.</p> <p>Both of the Representatives tried to ascertain function and role, as well as trying to find out exactly what brokerage was, to see if its description would seem less intimidating and formal.</p>
Date of Next Meeting	Next meeting is 30 June, 2.00pm – 4.00pm. Katy is sorting out a venue and will tell us where it is

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Recommendations / Actions

<i>For Office Use Only</i>	<i>Recommendation / Action</i>	<i>Date of Action Taken</i>	<i>Who By</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Find out how Request for Representative was phrased (this is their sixth meeting!). B) Discover what a Broker is and the definition of Brokerage. C) There are LINK participants in the Group, contact may be better through them, although obviously it would mean wearing two hats. D) If membership of this group is purely 		

	commercial, ie how do we get paid? Commissioned? And with very little reference to the individual that needs the service, is it a bona fide group for the LINK to be attached to?		
Name	Steph Moir / Becky Alvey		
Date	2 June 2011		