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## **Introduction to Commissioning Study Day** Luton, 8 December 2009

### **Background**

The event was organised by Luton LINK and supported by the Shaw Trust, Concilio / LINKs Academy and the University of Bedfordshire. Attendees came from as far a field as Leeds, Wakefield and Dudley but with the majority from London, Eastern region and the North Western end of the South East.

### **The Morning Sessions**

After a welcome from Luton LINK's Chair of Commissioning, Ann Brown, Professor Gurch Randhawa gave an overview of commissioning and Luton's take on what 'world class commissioning' meant. It was interesting to see how the vision of the NHS in Luton – 'continuously improving health outcomes' – led on to its four strategic priorities of:

- Increasing life expectancy
- Improve patient experience
- More choice and closer to home
- Encourage healthy living.

He also presented a case study on how NHS Luton had attempted to shift primary care provision into areas of high multiple deprivation and low life expectancy.

Dave Shields, LINKs Programme Lead for Department of Health (DH) South East, looked at local authorities and their approach / involvement in commissioning. This took a generally social services view of local government involvement with aspects of school funding (old children's social services) thrown in. He also gave a couple of definitions of what commissioning meant. Perhaps the most interesting part was his 'final thoughts', in which he outlined the possible roles of LINKs in commissioning. His view was that LINKs needed to be at the heart of commissioning services representing the service user perspective. His very last line was that LINKs should be involved in the roll-out of the 'Total Place' initiative which he defined as whole systems thinking. This is where I feel he could have gone further by looking at the impact of economic wellbeing and educational attainment on health and how LINKs could contribute to those agendas.

The final formal presentation of the morning was from Pauline Owen of Concilio Associates and dealt with Strategic Needs Assessment and its relationship to commissioning. This was then followed by round table discussions on how LINKs could contribute to the drawing up of the annual Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

### **The Afternoon Sessions**

There was a formal presentation from Keith Douglas from the Hampshire NHS which went into more detail on commissioning. There was a particularly helpful slide illustrating where he saw the LINK as having a role in the commissioning cycle, which runs from **Strategic development** to **Service design / redesign** to Market management to Contracting to Contract performance to **Assessment of need** and back to **Strategic development**.

I have highlighted in bold the areas where Keith Douglas saw a role for the LINK, though I would have also included contract performance as inadequate performance is what is reported to the LINK.

This was followed by a round-table discussion of barriers to public involvement in commissioning and how to overcome them.

I admit that I missed the final hour of Q and A as I felt that I had got as much out of the day as I was going to get.

### **Learning and Discussion Points**

The Luton LINK should be congratulated for organising the day, though a number of participants will have been disappointed that it did not go in commissioning in enough depth. However, I suspect that a lot of that information is in the CD which came with the study day pack. There was also a minority of participants who were overly obsessed with their own personal plain English campaigns, which slowed the morning sessions down.

### **Should Kent consider hosting something similar?**

Having been involved for a relatively short time in the Kent LINK, I have to confess that I am unsure of what our own vision is and how that relates to the various visions of the NHS and local government family.

### **Or is that my job to sort out as Strategic lead?**

It was useful to meet up with Richard Tripp and we feel we both need to talk to Graham about the question posed immediately above.

There are clearly areas in which the LINK could involve itself and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is one such, as is the Total Place agenda and the OnePlace inspection regime that goes with it.

→ How do we pursue this? Clearly direct meetings with Graham and Richard Tripp are required but should we also consider an away day for Governors to consider our vision / strategy / areas of engagement with NHS, local government, central government bodies and the voluntary sector?

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