

Your LINK for improving health and social care

www.thekentlink.co.uk



Kent LINK Strategic Direction

Introduction - the LINK's role

1. The Kent LINK has its remit set in statute through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Its role is clear:
 - a. Promote and support the involvement of people in commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local health and social care services
 - b. Obtain the views of people about their need for, and experiences of, local health and social care services
 - c. Convey views to the providers and commissioners of those services and scrutinisers (such as the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
 - d. Monitor and review the commissioning and provision of health and social care services.

The Kent LINK - how it has performed its role to date

2. The Kent LINK has concentrated on recruiting to the LINK as many individual people and organisations from as wide a background as possible and providing information and training to enable them to help the LINK to fulfil its statutory role.
3. It is felt that the Kent LINK should have more of a focus, now that it:
 - a. Is an established body in Kent with a robust and sustainable structure and governance arrangements, including decision making process and undertaking the LINK role in its communities
 - b. Has a large number of participants, many of whom are active
 - c. Has a large number of organisations involved which
 - d. Has qualified Authorised Visitors able to undertake the LINK's power to enter and view NHS / social care premises
 - e. LINK representatives on external group
 - f. Has a number of individual LINK participants engaged in LINK projects
 - g. Is acknowledged as an effective and valuable part of the local community, not only by individuals and voluntary / community groups but also by the statutory bodies.

4. From its launch in December 2008 the Kent LINK has adopted this strap-line:

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5. In addition, in its Annual Report for 2008 / 2009, the Kent LINK indicated its aims (relevant at that time) to:

- a. Get more people involved in helping shape Kent's health and social care services - including those who have previously had difficulty getting their voices heard
- b. Using people's experience of services to improve quality
- c. Establishing confidence in Kent's health and social care services by enabling people to monitor the quality of health and social care services
- d. Setting up a structure that has the confidence of the community - demonstrating independence and fairness.

Looking ahead – the future for the Kent LINK

6. Given the background above, LINK Governors feel that it could now propose to the wider LINK participants a more strategic direction, giving the LINK a focus for the forthcoming year and beyond. This is particularly important at this time as there is no clear direction from the Department of Health about the future arrangements (including funding) for Local Involvement Networks beyond March 2011, when the contracts for the Host organisations end.
7. At their meeting on 17 February 2010 the LINK Governors agreed to establish a small group to consider and advise the Governors' Group on the LINK strategy for the forthcoming year, a 24 month and five year period.
8. A small group of Governors, Mike Eddy, Mark Fittock, Cate Jackson and John Fletcher met with Brenda O'Neill and Graham Hills from the Host organisation (KMN) to discuss a clearer direction, a more focussed approach for the Kent LINK and attached at Appendix A are their strategic outline proposals.

Action for Governors

9. At Appendix A is a draft document entitled 'Kent LINK Strategic Direction'. This is presented to LINK Governors as a discussion document and for consideration at their meeting on 17 March 2010 with a view to agreement / decisions on the following:
 - a. The foundations upon which the strategic direction proposals are made (as above)
 - b. The lead Governor for Strategy prepares a more detailed proposal for the LINK's annual meeting that includes some background for participants to form a view
 - c. The proposal is presented to the LINK's Annual Meeting on 26 May 2010 for consideration and agreement by the wider LINK participants
 - d. If the strategy is agreed at the annual meeting that a Lead Governor is identified to take the individual aims forward.

Mike Eddy, Kent LINK Governor with Lead for LINK Strategy
Brenda O'Neill, KMN Lead Director for Governance
3 March 2010

Kent LINK strategic Direction

The Kent LINK's strategic aims are to:

1. Forge meaningful relationships with the aim to:
 - a. Ensure the LINK is informed of others' activities (that have relevance to the LINK)
 - b. Ensure the LINK is enabled to influence decisions made by other bodies
 - c. Enable the LINK to inform other bodies agendas (such as the regulators, Care Quality Commission)
2. Highlight inequalities in health / social care across the county with the aim to reduce such inequalities in Kent
3. Ensure that the Kent LINK is in a position to respond to relevant consultations / requests for public feedback in a timely fashion
4. Put in place a mechanism for the LINK to respond to NHS Trusts' Quality Accounts and its equivalent in social care
5. Put in place mechanisms / rules of engagement for the LINK to respond to requests / commissions from other organisations
6. Ensure the LINK's representatives on external groups are enabled to undertake their role (through the rules of engagement)
7. Build the LINK's capacity with the aim to:
 - a. Increase the number of participants involved in LINK activities
 - b. Increase the validity, effectiveness of the LINK's activities.

*****End of Appendix A*****