

Kent Local Involvement Network (LINK) YOUTH STRATEGY



Kent LINK Is...



open to anyone who lives, works or uses health/social care services in Kent

there to make your local services

- meet your needs
- be more accessible
- easier to use
- better publicised

able to make your voice heard about issues or concerns to do with health and social care using its influencing powers

Kent LINK Is Not

...



the Council

the NHS

Social Services

the Police

Kent LINK is made up of people and communities from across Kent who want to change health and social care services for the better

Giving everyone the chance to have their say and make a difference to health and social care services

Introduction

This strategy has been produced as a result of the need to better engage and involve young people in the Kent LINK. The document was drafted by a group of young people from the Kent Youth County Council with support from a Youth Worker and LINK Development Worker.

1. Why a strategy?

- To provide guidance for ensuring Kent LINK engages and involves young people in a way that is appropriate and effective for them
- To ensure adequate resources are allocated to support young people involved in Kent LINK.

2. Why do young people need to get involved?

- ✓ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – It is a right for children and young people to influence decisions that affect them including decisions about their health and social care needs
- ✓ To challenge the way Kent LINK, health and social care services currently involve young people in decisions
- ✓ Young people have a voice and deserve to be heard
- ✓ To take the opportunity to share their experiences of health and social care
- ✓ To help improve services for all young people, their families and friends
- ✓ To take an active role in the community and develop their confidence, self esteem, skills and knowledge
- ✓ Make change not just talk.

3. How young people can get involved

Some examples of how young people can get involved are:

- Implementing the youth strategy
- Developing a model for how young people use LINK to ensure they can get involved appropriately and effectively
- Creating publicity, website, blogs, e-newsletters and leaflets to help promote Kent LINK to young people and encourage them to take part in discussions, debates, raise their concerns about health and social services and get actively involved
- Acting as champions, supporting and empowering young people to get involved and have their say
- Working on projects to make sure health and social care services meet young people's needs.

4. **Ways of engaging young people**

It is important to ensure the way young people are engaged in the first instance is effective and appropriate. This includes ensuring timing is appropriate such as during school holidays, after school, evenings and weekends.

Engagement should be done through:

1. Schools (56 Independent schools, 17 Pupil Referral Units, 24 Special Schools, 104 Secondary Schools in Kent)
2. Youth organisations such as KCC Youth County Council, KCC Youth Services, Youth Offending Service, Youth Groups and Forums, CAMHS and Rainer
3. Public advertising such as on billboards, with students on health and social care courses and through school drama groups.

5. **Communication**

Clear, concise and effective communication is vital in empowering young people to get involved. There are many ways of communicating with young people but it is important to remain flexible in the methods we use to ensure no individuals or groups of young people are excluded from participating. Examples include:

- Email
- Text
- Website
- A Youth Bulletin
- E-newsletter
- Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube
- Bill boards
- Workshops
- Drama sessions
- Kent TV and local radio adverts.

6. **Barriers and solutions to youth involvement**

When young people get involved with the Kent LINK, consideration must be given to any barriers that may prevent young people from taking part. If young people need to attend meetings for example to discuss issues, work on projects or develop publicity consideration must be given to accessibility, transport and costs. This list highlights some key barriers and solutions but Kent LINK is committed to finding solutions to any other barriers or difficulties that may arise.

Barriers

Lack of resources
Transport to meetings
Timings of meetings
Cost of transport
Communication

Solutions

Ensure funding is available to support young people
Area based / geographical meetings on rotation
After school hours / weekends
Cover expenses / young person's rail card
Email / text / language / format ie colour, font size, audio

Involvement

Freedom to choose how, when and level of involvement

There is currently no set format for involving young people in Kent LINK activity, a structure is needed but also a method for feeding back. The structure will come from this strategy and it is envisaged that young people will develop a model, together with the support worker, to provide an effective method for involving young people and for them to influence health and social care in Kent. Feeding back to young people is vital for sustaining their interest and enthusiasm for remaining involved.

- ✓ Kent LINK will feedback to young people who participate in LINK activity.

7. **Measuring success**

To show that young people are using the opportunities that the Kent LINK offers, there needs to be specific targets such as:

- Number of young people signed up
- Number of young people actively involved
- Successful projects or pieces of work undertaken based on issues raised by young people.

8. **Toolkits available to support the participation of young people**

There are already a number of toolkits available to support the participation of young people and provide advice and guidance to ensure involvement is effective. We have gained the support of Kent Children's Fund Network whose primary remit is to embed youth participation in organisations across Kent and they have pledged to support the LINK where possible. Examples of toolkits are:

- 'Step Up 2 Participation' – Kent Children's Fund Network
- 'Participation: Spice It Up' – Save the Children
- 'The Kent Participation Framework' – Kent Children's Fund Network
- 'Youth at the Table' – British Youth Council.

9. **Policies and documents needed to support youth involvement**

When working with young people it is essential to have policies and procedures in place to protect both the young people and the organisation involved. Examples of the policies that would need to be developed are:

- Safeguarding children
- Child protection
- Lone working (with children)
- CRB checks
- Duty of Care
- Every Child Matters
- Consent forms (to attend meetings/events)

12. Conclusion

There is an estimated 188,700 young people aged 16 to 24 in Kent* but currently very few opportunities for them to have their say about services and get involved in health and social care.

There are already issues coming through to the LINK that affect young people's health and social care needs. There are also opportunities for joint working with organisations such as Government Office for the South East to involve young people in a project around access to health but currently not the resources to facilitate moving these forward effectively.

It is essential that adequate and appropriate support is given to young people to ensure that engagement and involvement is effective and not seen to be tokenistic and just ticking boxes. If the Kent LINK is to be successful in engaging and involving young people in shaping and improving health and social care across the county it is important resources are allocated. A support worker would ensure a named contact point for young people across the county who has a specific remit for supporting them and is able to dedicate time to them to ensure they get the best out of being part of the LINK.

The Kent LINK is already being innovative in its approach to patient and public involvement in health and social care and by developing a new model of involving young people provides another opportunity to lead the way and demonstrate the power of LINKs.

**source: ONS Mid year estimates 2008 – Research & Intelligence, Kent County Council*