



9 July 2010

Proposal to Kent LINK Priorities Panel from Governors' Sub Group

Introduction

1. The Priorities Panel has been operating in its current form since June 2009. The Kent LINK has grown considerably in that time. With that has come the means to access and gain input from a greater number / wider population of LINK participants. This is particularly relevant in considering how to assess issues which the LINK is being asked to consider.
2. In light of a number of factors a small group of Kent LINK Governors, Mike Eddy, Mark Fittock, John Holloway and Cate Jackson, have reviewed the working practice of the current group and developed the following proposal which they feel will provide a more robust method of dealing with issues being received by the Kent LINK. The factors included:
 - i. The failure to gain approval of the changes to the decision making process which were proposed at the Kent LINK Annual Meeting in May 2010
 - ii. The need to address 'closure' of issues raised with the LINK, both from the issuer's perspective and LINK's perspective
 - iii. Reporting of and accountability for decisions made with the evidence of scores assigned to issues
 - iv. The need to address who can make decisions in relation to work the LINK undertakes, given the appropriate information about the LINK's direction and resources.

Proposal

3. There continues to be a requirement for a group of Kent LINK participants to have responsibility for considering issues which are brought to the LINK, independently of the Governors' Group. This group of participants needs to, indicate to the Governors the extent to which action should be taken by the LINK using the LINK decision making framework to provide scores accordingly.
4. It is felt that the title 'Priorities Panel' which refers to the current group, who have been undertaking scoring and making recommendations for actions to be taken to address issues, does not adequately reflect the function of this group. Furthermore it implies a role

that is more in the remit of the Governors' Group, in light of its role to oversee the strategic direction and resources (funding) of the LINK.

5. The scoring process, which the group undertakes, does not in itself determine priorities, and the Kent LINK Governors have overall responsibility for allocating resources to issues coming into the LINK and thus its 'priorities'.
6. Therefore it is proposed to revise the current Terms of Reference of the Priorities Panel with a view to putting together an alternative method of receiving and considering issues raised by LINK participants, thereby replacing the current Priorities Panel.
7. The alternative method proposed would be to recruit and train 'LINK Lay Assessors' with the following individual responsibilities:
 - i. Receive issues raised with the LINK
 - ii. Assess the facts and expectations of the referrer
 - iii. Score the issue using the LINK criteria.
8. It is also proposed that the following personal attributes are required of LINK Lay Assessors:
 - i. Ability to empathise with an individual's circumstances / issue
 - ii. Ability to understand what action the LINK is able to take to address issues
 - iii. Be a team player
 - iv. Have experience as a patient / user of health and social care services
 - v. Be an objective thinker
 - vi. Ability to assess and evaluate information provided in order to comply with the LINK decision making framework.

Principles of the new process

9. This proposal is based on the following principles:

9.1 Aims and Objectives

- 9.1.1 To provide a more robust system by which issues being brought to the LINK are considered by a group of Kent LINK participants who operate independently of the Governors and indicate to the Governors whether or not action should be taken by the LINK, in order to address the limitations of the current process.

9.2 Structure

- 9.2.1 Between 17 and 31 LINK Lay Assessors recruited and trained to work virtually, on an individual basis as opposed to a collective one.

- 9.2.2 Individual Lay Assessors' scores and justification passed on to Kent & Medway Networks Ltd (Kent LINK's Host Organisation) to collate.
- 9.2.3 Kent LINK Governors receive collated data from the Host and make final decision as to what action the LINK should take, allocating resources accordingly. It is proposed that responsibility for this should be delegated to a sub-group of Governors, who would report to the main group regularly. This should be supported by the formation of a Governor role with lead responsibility for overseeing LINK 'Operational' matters.
- 9.2.4 This sub group would also monitor progress on previous issues, receiving a quarterly progress report and signing off issues for which no further action is required.

9.3 **Support**

- 9.3.1 Training would be provided for LINK Lay Assessors. At present the LINK is working with Greenwich University in training community researchers and this may be an avenue to explore in providing training for assessors.
- 9.3.2 Assessors would have support from a named person at KMN and be paired with another assessor as a 'buddy'.

9.4 **Accountability**

- 9.4.1 No Governor could be a LINK Lay Assessor. However the position would be open to other LINK roles such as Authorised Visitors or External Representatives.
- 9.4.2 Assessors would have individual responsibility for declaring potential conflicts of interest.

9.5 **Delegated Authority to the Host organisation**

The Governors' Sub Group also considered that some delegated authority should be given to the Host organisation that would allow them to progress issues in a timely way, prevent delays, avoid duplication of effort and avoid unnecessary reference to LINK Lay Assessors / the Governors' Sub Group. For example the Host should be delegated responsibility for:

- i. Writing to referrers who clearly have an individual complaint about the health / social care service and it is not one that impacts on any other individual / community
- ii. Writing to providers / commissioners of services for additional information as required
- iii. Providing any additional information to the referrer who could then be given the opportunity to take the matter up themselves (given the contact details and ability to do so) or ask that the LINK considers the matter further / in more detail
- iv. Report to the Governors' Group on a quarterly basis on all the issues dealt with and outcomes

- v. Close such cases where no further action is relevant / required.

9.6 Governors Group responsibilities

9.6.1 The Governors Group responsibilities should include:

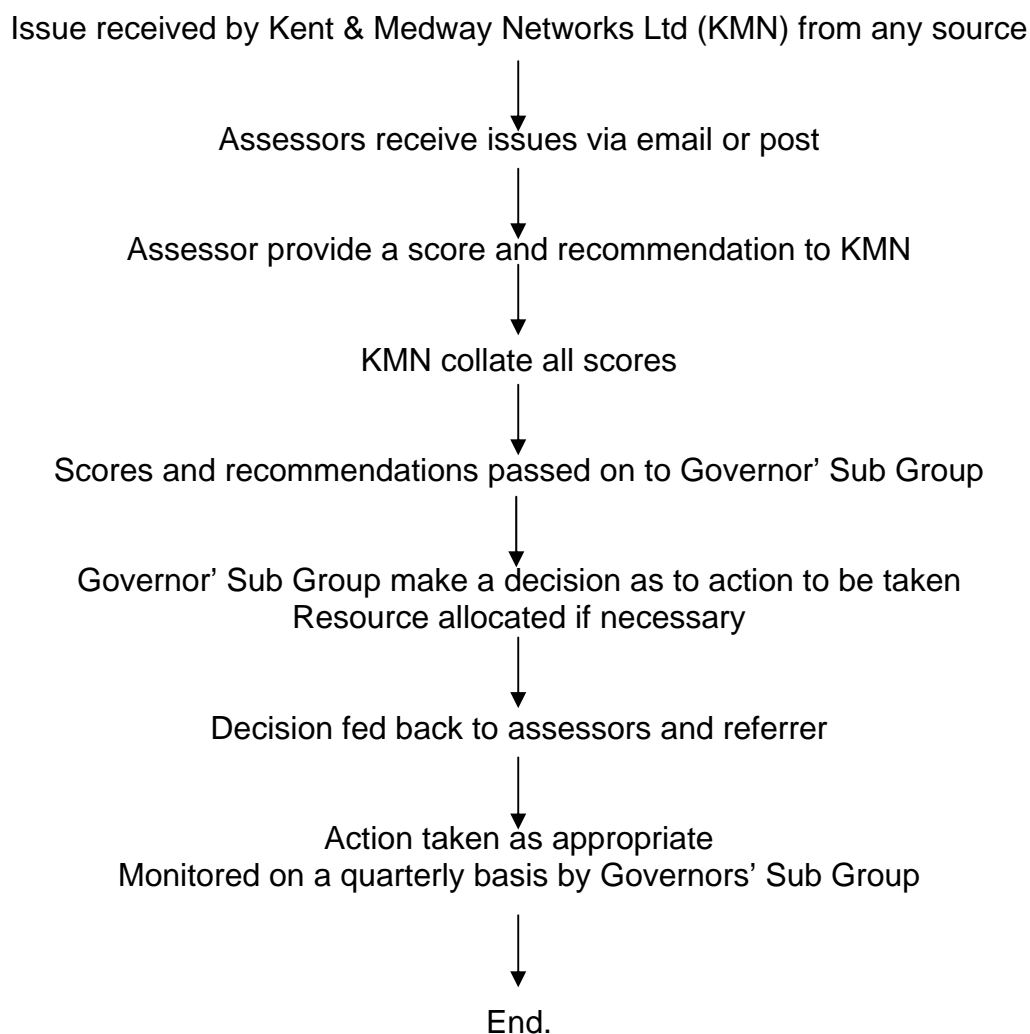
- i. Assigning priorities to referrals (ie issues that have been brought to the attention of the LINK), taking account of the LINK's current work programme, strategic direction and resources
- ii. Taking an operational lead on referrals through monthly / quarterly reports
- iii. Monitoring actions
- iv. Closure of referrals.

9.6.2 The Governors Group responsibilities should NOT include:

- i. Receiving any individual referrals (ie issues that have been brought to the attention of the LINK)
- ii. Assessing or scoring any individual referrals.

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9.6.3 The **process for issues coming into the LINK** would then be as follows:



Next steps

10. The proposal outlined above is to be presented to the Priorities Panel and Governors Group for consideration. The changes would need to be put to the wider LINK as part of a consultation, alongside the revised changes to the decision making framework.
11. In the meantime, the Priorities Panel will continue to operate in their current form and using the existing decision making framework and criteria for scoring, until at least the end of their current period of office on 30 September 2010. It is proposed that the LINK Lay Assessor method could be trialled in parallel to this.