
Meeting: Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 22 October 2012

Subject: LINK Report

Report of: Bob Smith, Chairman of Bedfordshire LINK

Summary: The report is to update Members on the key work items and issues the LINK is engaged with for consideration and information as required.

Contact Officer: Charlotte Bonser (Bedfordshire LINK Operations Manager)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.

Financial:

2. Not applicable.

Legal:

3. Not applicable.

Risk Management:

4. Not applicable.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. Not applicable.

Public Health

7. Not applicable.

Community Safety:

8. Not applicable.

Sustainability:

9. Not applicable.

Procurement:

10. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the report as appropriate.

Background

11. The LINK report is an update on work items in progress or issues that have come to light over the course of the last year; the findings of which will be passed to Healthwatch.
12. The report gives feedback on visits to two care homes in Central Bedfordshire, findings from the visit to the Acute Adult Trauma – Reginald Hart Ward: Elective Orthopaedic and Women’s Health bay – Richard Wells Ward at Bedford Hospital and feedback from the Hospital, and a summary of the main themes from the LINK legacy review.

Feedback from visits to care/nursing homes in Central Bedfordshire

13. Four visits out of the six to care and nursing home have been completed. Two planned visits have had to be scheduled for October because of the co-ordination of volunteer and home schedules. The purpose of LINK visits is to observe:
 - The quality of the service provided for residents
 - To obtain the views of the residents, staff on the service provided
 - To complete a report on the outcomes of Enter and View visit.

Prior to visits LINK members check out the care/nursing home website, look at the last Local Authority Compliance Visit Report and the latest CQC report.

16. The LINK is now able to share summaries and recommendations from two care/residential home visits, that is from the Woodside Residential Home, Slip End and The Paddocks, near Dunstable.

Woodside Residential Home, Slip End – the majority of residents have some level of dementia

“During the course of our visit we noted that all the areas that were in use were clean and there were no undue odours. The food produced for lunch looked appetising. Systems are in place for the administration of medication and security. Disabled access is available to the majority of the buildings. Information is on display or available on request. There are a range of services and activities available for the residents and the opportunity to continue with external activities. We observed how the staff respected and treated the residents as human beings, speaking softly and using prompts without rushing the residents. The residents and staff that we spoke to made positive comments about the Woodside Home as a service provider and employer.

We recommended:

- That as part of the building refurbishment the home owners go ahead with their plans to update their website. They could consider the possibility of providing a small separate area for visitors where they can also consider locating paper information.
- Following the building refurbishment and the commencement of the registration as a residential/nursing care home, that another visit take place by Bedfordshire LINK or HealthWatch in one year’s time.”

The Paddocks, Nr Dunstable is a home specialising in dementia, stroke care, general fragility and other disabling conditions for the over 65 age group.

LINK members had the opportunity to speak to staff and residents but found that not all residents could be responsive.

The general impression was of a well-run, happy home with both residents and staff appearing relaxed and contented, interacting happily. Several visitors popped in whilst we were there.

Meals were not observed as it seemed in-appropriate to stay longer in what is a confined space.

A feature of The Paddocks is its spacious and attractive grounds. It would be good to improve access (e.g. for wheelchairs) and to provide shelter (? a summer-house) and perhaps some bird-feeders to provide interest all year round.

There does seem to be a need for extra space, perhaps a room for the use of residents (quiet activity, reading and private conversation), visitors and possibly staff breaks.

Staff appeared to have time to pay respectful and affectionate attention to the small number of residents.

17. LINK visits to Greenacre Care Home and Meppershall Nursing Home have also taken place, and the visit reports are currently with the respective homes for the checking of factual accuracy.

The full LINK visit reports are available if members would like copies, and will be placed on the LINK website in due course.

LINK Findings from visits to Bedford Hospital Acute Adult Trauma, Elective Orthopaedics and Women's Health Bay

18. Follows an extract from the executive summary of the report:

“It was a pleasure to visit these busy areas, particularly the Reginald Hart Ward, that were clean and run very effectively.

It was evident that there was some pressure on the acute trauma ward, Reginald Hart, over the smooth running of discharges although the Discharge Lounge was proving an advantage.

It was understood that patients, who had a fractured femur, were arriving by Ambulance from areas that would have normally have gone to The Lister Hospital at Stevenage. This additional work-load had not been officially notified to staff.”

19. *Comments from the report regarding discharge*

It was noted, in the trauma unit, that there were a number of patients waiting for discharge to be completed. It was clear that a close watch is maintained on all patients who are at this stage of their stay. Mention was made of the difficulties encountered with discharge of those patients following ankle fracture – non-weight bearing is a challenge.

20. Bedford Hospital has now received the LINK reports for this and the previous visit to the Coronary Care Ward, and have added their comments. The hospital was pleased with the outcome of the visits and have asked the LINK to do a joint press release about some of the findings.

Findings from the LINKs Legacy : 360 Degree Review of LINK Board Members

21. This review is part of a key element in the LINK Exit and Legacy Strategy in the transition from LINK to Healthwatch. The interviews were conducted by a LINK member from the wider LINK membership undertaking one-to-one interviews with the LINK Board members. Views have also been sought from the wider LINK membership, the voluntary sector and other key stakeholders through a questionnaire
22. Generally Board members felt that they had been effective in helping to shape the way that LINK prioritises and undertakes work and were particularly proud of the work around gathering information on experiences of discharge from hospital, progressing work on enter and view visits and generally raising relevant issues and awareness. But expressed concern that there were a few volunteers trying to do a considerable job, and just touching the surface on some issues in health and social care.

The Board members wanted to ensure that the skills and expertise of volunteers were not lost during the transition. They felt that Healthwatch needed a clear marketing strategy to ensure that its existence and aims and objectives are well known and clear. They commented that getting information from commissioners and providers was sometimes a challenge saying that “they receive very little regular information back from providers or commissioners of health and social care and that it would be helpful to regularly share information so that everyone can understand what the key issues and areas of concern are across the board.” Members welcomed the opportunity to comment and felt it had been a useful exercise.

The LINK Chairman has also reflected on the work of the LINK and the issues faced over the last three years, and his report is attached as an appendix.

23. The process for transition to Healthwatch is continuing in parallel with the LINK concluding its workplan. LINK colleagues were involved in a workshop with the Voluntary Sector on 25 September to look at the possibility of a consortia approach to delivering a Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Pathfinder. Discussions on this are progressing.

Appendix:

Appendix - Report of the LINK Chairman regarding recent review activities.

Background papers and their location (open to public inspection):

None