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

Date: 21 January 2013

Subject: LINK Report

Report of: Bob Smith, Chairman of Bedfordshire LINK

Summary: As the LINK approaches its final months of work before the introduction of Local Healthwatch, this report is an update on progress made on the work themes highlighted in its workplan for 2012/13 as detailed in the LINK Annual Report 2011-12.

The LINK is also in the process of producing a final interim report for the period April 2012 – March 2013.

The 2011-12 Annual Report can be accessed on the LINK website at www.bedfordshirelink.co.uk

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.
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Financial:

2. Not applicable.

Legal:

3. Not applicable.

Risk Management:

4. Not applicable.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):
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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 highlighted in its last Annual Report the need to continue to look at and conduct some more work to gauge patient experience in certain areas of health and social care. It also identified the need to prepare for Healthwatch, and this has been a key task over the last year.

This report focuses on the LINK contribution to work on :

- the Pathfinder Central Bedfordshire Healthwatch,
- hospital discharge and nursing care,
- the completion of the work on visits to care/nursing homes
- mental health provision and pathways through the system following the transformation of mental health provision and changes to inpatient mental health bed facilities and the focus on care in the community and personalised budget.
- LINK membership Skills Audit; and
- encouraging the participation of children and young people in Healthwatch, with a particular aim to hear that their voices are heard.

Preparing for Healthwatch

12. The LINK continues to be involved in the development of Central Bedfordshire Healthwatch and participates in Healthwatch Pathfinder meetings with colleagues from the voluntary and community sector, NHS and the Council. The LINK was involved in the production of the joint submission to become a Pathfinder Healthwatch area; and is keen to see the establishment of an organisation that involves the third sector, patient participation groups and partners supporting Healthwatch or becoming an active Healthwatch partner or similar.
13. In LINK feedback on its legacy, it has stressed the importance of communication and raising awareness of Healthwatch as widely as possible. It has indicated how important the volunteer base is to the success of such an organisation and the need to continue to involve, engage and develop the active LINK membership currently existing as well as recruiting new participants. The LINK has shown how its current structure of gathering information through recording incidents and working through these issues within its working groups in health, social care and mental health and learning disabilities has been successful. It has also demonstrated the ability to develop its own training for members in enter and view visits to all health and social care bases, and hopes the new Healthwatch organisation will use these skills and develop them as required as Healthwatch evolves.

Hospital Discharge and Nursing Care

14. The LINK continues to record incidents relating to discharge and nursing care, particularly where patient care has been perceived to be inadequate or poor. This record includes all health and social care bases where there is inpatient care and patients are discharged. Therefore this log now includes feedback on the Short Stay Medical Unit in Houghton Regis.
15. Where there have issues of concern in the area of hospital discharge and nursing care, the LINK has reported these to both the OSC and Shadow Health and Well Being Board colleagues. This has resulted in the LINK being involved in the OSC Hospital Discharge Task Group, and having contact with the NHS Director of Nursing to report concerns in relation to nursing care.

Enter and View Visits to Care / Nursing Homes

16. The detailed reports of the visits and general findings of this work have been shared with the Committee in previous reports.

Mental Health provision and pathways for service users

17. Following three visits to mental health bases; namely Crombie House, Community MH provision, Leighton Buzzard, Cedar House & Fountains Court and Barford Avenue and Day Resource Centres in June, August and November 2011, LINK members found service users to be satisfied with the care they received and found people were enthusiastic about having activities in an organised setting. The LINK remains keen to monitor experiences and perceptions of service users to any changes in the way services are delivered and how it affects their recovery. It continues to report any issues of concern to the Trust, SEPT at its quarterly meetings with the Trust. It also regularly invites appropriate colleagues from SEPT/LA to update the LINK on Mental Health and Learning Disability Commissioning, joint commissioning at its Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Working Group meetings.
18. The LINK has also noted that the Trust (SEPT) is instigating a new infrastructure of meetings for service user/stakeholders across Bedfordshire, and the LINK is keen to ensure that the voices of service users from Central Bedfordshire are heard in any new structure and is following developments in this area closely. Because notice of meetings and paperwork are not received in good time, this is proving a challenging situation. However, the LINK and Healthwatch needs to monitor the situation to ensure service users have forums to share and channel their views, comments and concerns.

LINK Members Skills Audit

19. Currently as members join the LINK, an audit of their skills and experience is carried out through a brief questionnaire. A further questionnaire has been issued, as part of the legacy work, to the active membership to ensure skills and experience will not be lost whilst Healthwatch is being developed.

Encouraging the participation of children and young people in LINK/Healthwatch

20. Although there has always been lack of clarity about the involvement of children and young people in LINKs stemming from unclear Government directives, the LINK in Central Bedfordshire has tried to involve young people in its work. In 2011, it had some success in recruiting a young person from the Youth Parliament to sit on the LINK Board for a period of six months, but then he moved on to study and work.

21. The LINK continues to improve its understanding of working with children and young people by inviting speakers from the voluntary sector, including the Childrens, Young Peoples and Families Officer who works in the voluntary sector networking across all organisations working with children and young people.
22. The LINK has also recently recruited volunteers who have particular experience in working with children and young people.

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

None