



IF A STRONGER LOCAL VOICE

POSITIVE RESULTS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



CARERS FEDERATION LIMITED

LINKs
Local Involvement Networks

IMPACT REPORT

DIVERSE RANGE OF PEOPLE FROM ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY

150 LINKS NATIONWIDE

“A STRONGER LOCAL VOICE”

POSITIVE RESULTS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

THE FACTS

WHO, WHAT, WHERE AND HOW

ABOUT LINKs

- LINKs stands for ‘Local Involvement Networks’
- Brought in to replace Patient Forums in April 2008, LINKs act as a channel for local opinion on health and social care services throughout England
- They give people the chance to say what is working and what is not, and help make improvements in local services
- Every local authority area with responsibility for social services has a LINK; there are 150 LINKs nationwide
- LINKs are independent; they are not part of local government or the National Health Service (NHS)
- LINKs can influence health and social care services commissioned by the NHS and local authorities, and those run by independent providers which are also publicly funded
- Children’s social services are the only services which are excluded from the LINK remit

WHO CAN JOIN?

- Anyone can join the LINK in their area including individuals and organisations such as charities, local business and community groups

- Made up of a diverse range of people from all sectors of the local population, the LINK is both representative and inclusive

- Members of the community can still have their voices heard on issues that are important to them without becoming members of the LINK

- All LINK members are given training to help equip them in their roles

WHAT POWER DO LINKs HAVE?

- The powers of the LINKs are laid down in the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act

- Under the law LINKs can ask health and social care commissioners for information about their services

- LINKs can issue reports and make recommendations about a service and can expect to receive a response from service providers within 20 working days

- LINKs representatives are able to enter certain services and view care provision, under ‘Enter and View’ powers

- They can also refer matters to the local council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further action

THE HOST

- Each local authority is given funding from the Department of Health to pay an organisation such as the Carers Federation to provide practical ongoing support to the LINKs as ‘host’

- Carers Federation Ltd is a charity that provides a range of services within the health and social care area; it currently hosts ten LINKs

- The host is effectively a central point or hub for the LINKs they manage. It provides a key co-ordinating role for the LINKs, assisting with work planning and community engagement, administration and training

- Over 4,000 members make up the ten Carers Federation LINKs

- Together these individuals and organisations form a stronger local voice, helping to improve services for all the community.

WELCOME...

SHOWCASING THE WORK OF LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORKS (LINKs)

Since April 2008 LINKs have given communities a stronger local voice on how their health and social care services are delivered.

Independent, diverse and inclusive, each LINK is made up of a network of people and organisations that together act as a catalyst for improvement in these vital services.

Working closely with the local commissioners and service providers, LINKs have successfully changed services for the better. Responding directly to the needs of the local community, they have helped improve access to dental services, simplified GP appointments systems, established respite care for those that need it most, and much more.

As host organisation to ten of the 150 LINKs across England, Carers Federation has worked closely with these networks and the communities they serve, witnessing successes such as these first hand. This Impact Report has been produced to showcase some of the success stories and, in doing so, help highlight the real value and impact of the LINKs within the local community.

We hope you will enjoy finding out more about the valuable contribution LINKs make in helping to improve health and social care services for the whole community.

Julia Tabreham, chief executive, Carers Federation

AREA WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES HAS A LINK

ANYONE CAN JOIN THE LINK IN THEIR AREA INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS CHARITIES, LOCAL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS



Blackburn with Darwen LINK



INTRODUCTION

A SIGNIFICANT LOCAL CONTRIBUTION

Blackburn with Darwen LINK has made a significant contribution to the local health and social care economy through focusing on outcomes rather than processes.

This success can be attributed directly to the individuals and community, plus the charity and voluntary organisations of Blackburn with Darwen, all of whom have contributed so much in terms of their opinions, ideas and hard work.

As a result, the LINK enjoys the goodwill and support from stakeholders within NHS Trusts and the local authority, particularly the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which has helped the LINK to make a positive contribution to service improvement in the area. Blackburn with Darwen LINK is also featured on the NHS Health Choices website and has contributed to the Department of Health's national evaluation of LINKs.

Other successes that can be attributed to the LINK include the rebuilding of a bus shelter at the hospital, improving hospital staff knowledge of - and access to - hearing loops, and the resolution of an important issue regarding the treatment of dementia patients.

CASE STUDY

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AT ITS BEST

Improved hospital signposting, patient information on accident and emergency processes along with better infection control are just three outcomes that can be directly attributed to the efforts of Blackburn with Darwen LINK.

Working closely with stakeholders and members of the public, the LINK has been able to facilitate the introduction of a number of changes at the Blackburn Royal Hospital Accident and Emergency Services department.

Patients are now given a leaflet clarifying processes surrounding emergency and urgent care; directional signage at the hospital has also been improved and more hand cleansing dispensers introduced.

Together these measures have led to quicker treatment, reduced patient frustration and anxiety, along with better infection control.

GOOD NEWS

RESPITE CARE INTRODUCED EARLIER

Blackburn with Darwen LINK discovered that no facilities existed for mental health respite care in the area and none were planned for a further two years, leaving a gap in provision.

Since the LINK began asking questions on this issue existing crisis facilities have been extended to cover respite care, providing a facility for much needed short term breaks for carers and their families.



I would like to thank all members of the LINK for the significant amount of work undertaken over the past year during the 'Enter and View' visits. The LINK acts as a 'critical friend' to the Trust and suggests ways for us to further improve our patient experiences from a user point of view, reinforcing our successes. We look forward to working collaboratively with the LINK in the future.

Lynn Wissett, deputy chief executive and director of clinical care & governance, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust



Cheshire East LINK



INTRODUCTION

PARTNERSHIP WORKING REAPS BENEFITS

Working closely with the host team at Carers Federation, Cheshire East LINK has been able to bring together the skills and knowledge of local people and at the same time gain the credibility and respect of stakeholders in the area.

The result has been the creation of a positive culture of partnership working with some significant benefits for local people. And because LINKs are about providing an independent voice for local people, it is, of course, important that they are as representative as possible of the local population. Cheshire East LINK is an excellent example of this inclusive approach.

The ethnic minority community is well represented at committee level and the Cheshire LINK also works in partnership with some key ethnic organisations in the area. As members of the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Racial Equality Council the LINK now has better access to organisations involved in equality and diversity initiatives.

CASE STUDY

LINK HELPS INTRODUCE IMPORTANT SERVICE

Through direct consultation with the Primary Care Trust (PCT), Cheshire East Community Health and GP surgeries, Cheshire East LINK has been instrumental in establishing a new podiatry service in the area.

Apart from ensuring that local people could get the treatment they needed for foot problems, the LINK also recommended that a non profit making nail cutting service be set up which would allow patients earlier access to treatment and prevent problems escalating.

Requests were made to a number of bodies for funding based on a proposed model that would self fund within three years. As a result the local PCT commissioning manager explored funding options. The service is now in place, running well and benefiting the local community.

GOOD NEWS

TRAINING IMPROVES MEMBERS' SKILLS

Following a number of 'Enter and View' activities undertaken by Cheshire East LINK the resultant reports have not only been praised by health and social care providers, they have also been used as training examples by other LINKs across the country. 15 LINK members have received training to enable them to conduct these investigations effectively. The clearly structured training programme includes:

- Information and guidance about 'Enter and View'
- Report writing skills
- Support regarding vulnerable adults
- Regular 'get together sessions' to feedback progress and agree priorities
- Probationary 'Enter and View' visits including peer-to-peer mentoring.



The podiatry project has been a brilliant example of working together and shows just what can be done when everyone is pulling to achieve something of benefit.

Geoff Wood, projects officer, Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT





Cheshire West and Chester LINK

INTRODUCTION

ENGAGING WITH ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY

Firmly established within the local area, one of the key strengths of the Cheshire West and Chester LINK is its ability to engage with 'hard to reach' groups and those more vulnerable members of society.

A clear example of this is the LINK's relationship with organisational member, the Cheshire Gypsy and Travellers' Voice, as a result of which members are now better informed about diversity issues affecting this section of the community.

Cheshire West and Chester LINK has also established a strong working relationship with Chester Aid to the Homeless, running focus groups to find out more about the health and social care issues affecting homeless people, and arts-based projects aimed at raising service users' self esteem.

Furthermore, efforts to attract young people to the LINK in order to boost membership from this under-represented group have resulted in the recruitment of over 125 members between the ages of 18 and 25.

CASE STUDY

PUTTING OBESITY HIGH ON THE AGENDA

The problem of obesity was an issue that Cheshire West and Chester LINK tackled head on in the local area with promising results.

It produced a report on teenage obesity which challenged the local authority's decision not to take up Government funding to finance a free swimming programme. It was also a decision that ignored evidence from the Western Cheshire Primary Care Trust highlighting the need to encourage all forms of sports activity among young people in an effort to reduce obesity.

Although it became too late to introduce the swimming scheme, following the LINK's recommendations, the Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group at the council has since agreed to give the issue of obesity the highest priority in future.

Moreover, the local council has agreed to have greater consultation with sports bodies and service users before making a decision on future government grant funding for sports activity. The LINK has also asked councillors to review schools' policies over the number of swimming lessons they provide.

GOOD NEWS

KEEPING ON TOP OF LOCAL OPINION

The Cheshire West and Chester LINK has published a detailed report into the issues surrounding the personalisation of social care budgets which changes the way social care services are managed.

Because talking to the service users themselves is the best way of understanding the effects of issues such as personalisation, the LINK has kept on top of local opinion by staging a number service user led focus groups and consultation events.

This has ensured that the roll-out of personalised budgets in the Cheshire West and Chester area has involved the close co-operation of the LINK which is now giving input into the production of video training materials to be used by Social Services staff.



Darlington LINK

INTRODUCTION

A 'NETWORK OF NETWORKS'



Darlington LINK is a network of networks involving many different people in achieving a better and more efficient service from health and social care providers in the area.

Thanks to active and engaged membership, the LINK has been able to forge positive connections with key groups and members of the community including the local council and other stakeholders such as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the local Primary Care Trust and the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

The fact that anyone is free to join a LINK is reflected in the diverse interests of those that make it up; it can also be seen from the areas of work the LINK gets involved in, from access to GP services to support for stroke victims.

Alongside this, the LINK is putting effort into attracting younger people to become members along with those from diverse groups including the travelling community.

CASE STUDY

MAKING HEALTH SERVICES ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Darlington LINK has helped improve access to local GP surgeries for those with learning disabilities after the issue was first raised by an organisational member that provides support to this section of the community.

As a result, the LINK actively sought public opinion on the issue, engaged with the local Primary Care Trust and requested information from GP surgeries.

All the evidence was then brought together in a GP Access Report which highlighted a clear variation in the performance and approach to service delivery among GP practices in the area.

Well received by the Darlington Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the LINK will now meet with each local GP surgery to share the findings; there are also plans to repeat the GP survey in future and keep on top of public opinion to help ensure GP surgeries are accessible to all members of the community.

GOOD NEWS

MAKING HEADWAY WHERE OTHERS HAVE FAILED

Darlington LINK has made headway in improving mental health services in the area after local service users came forward to highlight issues they were facing.

A task group was set up by the LINK which is actively working to obtain information from all services in Darlington surrounding access to the Mental Health Crisis team. Many members of the public were also approached to share information and give Darlington LINK a full and thorough picture of the current service provided.

As a result, the Carers Federation host team has put a case to the correct contact responsible for the service at the Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust, to ensure that concerns will be listened to and acted upon.



“ The Alzheimer's Society has held similar smaller roadshows but this event brought in the most people. I spoke to 14 people who had all been touched by dementia, either personally or by someone they care for. To put this figure into context, we normally take between six and 10 new referrals per month! Thank you Cheshire West and Chester LINK for helping us raise awareness.

Fan Miller, campaigns officer at The Alzheimer's Society commenting on a joint event held with Cheshire West and Chester LINK

“ The Darlington LINK has played an important role monitoring the implementation of a major service reconfiguration as part of a local Oversight Board. The LINK has also been a key part of our engagement strategy to talk to local stakeholders and groups about the development of stroke services.

Edmund Lovell, associate director of marketing and communications, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust



INTRODUCTION

TASK GROUPS SHAPE SERVICES

Doncaster LINK has over 200 members, made up of both individuals and organisations from across the borough. It is a membership that is growing all the time thanks to efforts of the LINK's Information, Communications and Engagement Group in engaging with new partners, building awareness about its work and identifying areas of public concern.

Since it first became established Doncaster LINK has helped drive through improvements in local health and social care services through various task groups.

The GP Access group and the Discharge Procedure group have now completed in-depth investigations and produced reports that include recommendations aimed at improving service user experience.

Since January 2010 Doncaster LINK has also doubled in size and continues to work hard in attracting new members, particularly from the 'harder to reach' communities.

CASE STUDY

IMPROVING ACCESS TO DENTAL TREATMENT

The LINK has managed to improve access to dental services after residents from the Highfields area of Doncaster voiced concerns over lack of dentistry provision in their locality.

Many were unaware of how to register with a dentist; others wanted preventative treatment for their children. There were difficulties in obtaining emergency appointments as well as practical issues over travelling ten miles to a nearby town for such treatment. Residents complained of the difficulties in reaching a dentist using public transport.

The LINKs host team discussed these concerns with the Doncaster NHS prevention manager and as a result a meeting was held between the Doncaster Oral Prevention Team and the Highfields residents.

During this meeting many concerns were addressed; residents were also advised that some dental services would be relocated to the town centre. In addition, it was agreed that information on gaining access to dental services and promotion of oral health needed to be improved.

The LINK members continue to work with the residents of Highfields and the Oral Prevention Team to help ensure that access to dental services continues to improve.



GOOD NEWS

LINKs REPORT PRAISED

Following the publication of Doncaster LINK's Discharge from Hospitals and After Care Survey Report the Mayor of Doncaster wrote to the chair of that specific task group congratulating her on the work carried out. The Mayor found the report "very concise and informative" and was in full support of all the recommendations proposed.

The report proposed, amongst other things, that all patients needing aftercare in the community be given a 'written aftercare package', and that training to be given to hospital staff to develop communication skills. The group identified that existing hospital discharge procedures were of real concern for the local residents of Doncaster and felt that if the recommendations were put into place this would help improve the overall service.



INTRODUCTION

SERVICES BENEFIT FROM COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Herefordshire LINK has proved itself to be an important independent voice for local people, positively influencing the way their health and social care services are provided in the county.

The formation of solid partnerships has been instrumental in securing service improvements for local people. Indeed, working collaboratively with the local authority and Primary Care Trust, sharing work practices and plans has saved duplication and helped achieve more.

Taking one example, the Herefordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) recently met with the chair of Herefordshire LINK to consider work streams and asked if the LINK would consider working on a project to look at access to pharmacy and medical services in rural Herefordshire. Apparently volunteers or members of the community were being relied upon to pick up prescriptions or provide transport to GPs and community hospitals.

The LINK was asked to explore the issue and provide feedback to Herefordshire PCT about good practice and, in conjunction with the OSC, look at ways of putting services into areas where gaps in provision were identified.

CASE STUDY

'LIFE SAVING' CHANGES AT AMBULANCE SERVICE

Thanks to the work of Herefordshire LINK important improvements have now been put in place at Herefordshire Ambulance Station which will help improve patient safety and could even save lives.

The West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) invited the LINK to conduct an 'Enter and View' visit which highlighted a number of problems. Sharps containers (those used for the disposal of used syringes) were being left open, the manual stock management system was inefficient and there was a lack of 'tracheal introducer' equipment used to help patients breathe.

The LINK's findings were put to the Herefordshire ambulance station and addressed by the Trust. WMAS were very pleased with the results and additional ambulance stations have since been visited to help improve standards across the service.

GOOD NEWS

VISIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

As a result of a student placement developed by the LINK in conjunction with the Royal National College for the Blind, a partnership project was put in place with the hospital Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) team to help improve hospital access, information and experience for those with a visual impairment. A number of outcomes have been achieved including:

- Offers by the college to provide training on visual impairment issues for staff
- Further investigation into improving signage and web access to information
- Plans by PALS to look at improvements to the appointment booking systems
- Discussions to put in place a hospital disabilities user engagement forum.

"The thing that has excited me most is the way in which our local NHS and council services have been eager to welcome our involvement."

Dorothy Head, member, Doncaster LINK

"During the short time since joining the LINK team as an administrator I have been involved in many interesting pieces of work and projects. The project itself is very worthwhile and the people I work with - from fellow staff to volunteers - make you feel that you are making a real difference to health and social care services across Herefordshire."

Kath Thomas, administrator, Herefordshire LINK



Leicester LINK

INTRODUCTION

A VOICE FOR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Leicester City LINK is a LINK which represents the multicultural city it is based within, in terms of the membership that makes it up and also the Board elected to represent these individuals and organisations.

The LINK has in excess of 500 members and is in contact with over 1300 volunteer groups within Leicester, enabling it to act as a useful conduit for the people of Leicester to voice their views about local health and social care services.

This broad and diverse membership, along with the partnership relationships fostered by the Leicester City LINK, also mean that it is able to engage with virtually any minority group in the area.

Valued for both the benefits the LINK has been able to bring and its independence where health and social care issues are concerned, Leicester City LINK has an important role to play within the local community.



Middlesbrough LINK

INTRODUCTION

DIVERSITY AND INDEPENDENCE



Middlesbrough LINK has travelled a long way since the early beginnings in 2008. Much of the initial time was spent setting up the framework, governing policies and supporting members of the Middlesbrough LINK Board, known as the Core Group, to understand what LINKs were about and how their involvement was vital to its success.

The foundations are now firmly in place at Middlesbrough LINK and credibility continues to grow locally. Now with a well established, knowledgeable and invigorated Core Group made up of people who have a good understanding of its objectives, Middlesbrough LINK is able to engage actively with the local community in giving people a stronger local voice.

None of this would be possible without the healthy partnerships the LINK has fostered during this time with voluntary and statutory organisations in the area. Constantly working to broaden membership, Middlesbrough LINK has been particularly successful in recruiting younger people to its membership, helping the LINK to evolve as a diverse and independent channel for opinion on local health and social care issues.

CASE STUDY

LINK GETS BEHIND CAMPAIGN TO SAVE IMPORTANT SERVICE

The LINK has been at the forefront of a campaign to save important local healthcare services in the area of paediatric cardiology, the treatment of heart conditions in babies and children, at Leicester Glenfield Hospital.

Leicester City LINK immediately joined forces with the Leicestershire County LINK and national charity, Heart Link, to create a united local voice supported by local newspaper, the Leicester Mercury, which had become heavily involved in the campaign. Now, thanks to the backing of all councillors and MPs in the Leicestershire area the LINK has a petition of over 30,000 signatures.

Furthermore, the campaign has been given an additional boost as a result of MP for Leicester West, Liz Kendal, raising the issue in Prime Minister's question time.

GOOD NEWS

HELPING TO GET THE RIGHT KIND OF SUPPORT

A LINK member who had undergone gender re-alignment surgery was concerned about the isolation and lack of support she had received while undertaking this complex medical procedure.

After initial investigation it became apparent that, at the time, there was little or no emotional support in place during or after gender re-alignment surgery.

She was put in touch with the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transsexual (LGBT) group of Leicester by the LINK office which gave her renewed confidence as a result of the help and support received.

The LINK and the LGBT are currently working together to tackle this problem and help all patients who are facing this life event to get the support they clearly need.



“The Leicester LINK offers members of the public a chance to engage with health and social care service providers. We work closely with all the NHS providers in Leicester City and the local council to ensure they are accountable, but also that they have the chance to improve their service.”

Micheal Smith, team leader for Leicester LINK, Carers Federation

CASE STUDY

PARKING IMPROVEMENTS BENEFIT MANY

The LINK first became aware of concerns about the use and abuse of the 'Blue Badge' disabled parking scheme following conversations with local disabled people. As a result, a working group was set up to investigate the use of the scheme within the borough, to identify the extent of the problem and make realistic recommendations for the scheme's improvement.

Following the LINK Blue Badge report, the Primary Care Trust and local GP surgeries began negotiating with Middlesbrough Council over the introduction of additional parking spaces near surgeries. Parking has also been improved at James Cook University Hospital with the introduction of a 'red zone' no parking zone designed to improve access for emergency vehicles.

The working group will continue to keep on top of the issue and assess what additional improvements can be made to Blue Badge parking.

GOOD NEWS

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In January 2010, two 'Visioning Days' were held where members were able to review progress to date and, perhaps more importantly, look at where they wanted the LINK to be in a year's time.

Members agreed new working arrangements with a greater emphasis on the working groups and open themed events. Time was made for the latter by reducing Core Group meetings from monthly to alternate months. The first event took place in partnership with South Tees Hospital Trust and raised some interesting healthcare issues for the people of Middlesbrough.



“The LINK is a great place to get involved and make a difference.”

Catherine Haigh, chair of the Core Group, Middlesbrough LINK



Nottinghamshire County LINK

INTRODUCTION

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE IN FACILITATING CHANGE

One of the major achievements for Nottinghamshire County LINK has been its success in engaging with local people from all areas of the county to create real change.

Thanks in part to the flexibility in the way the LINK is set up, and also the fact that it is independent of any health or social care organisation, the Nottinghamshire County LINK has been able to encourage participation from all sectors of the community in helping facilitate improvements in services.

What's more, because the LINK works closely with the host team at Carers Federation in planning its work, members

know there is real structure and purpose in the changes that are being made.

All in all, Nottinghamshire County LINK has been able to build a growing, diverse and well informed membership that is leading to positive improvements in local health and social care services.

CASE STUDY

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATES IN WORKSHOPS

The local community has been able to take an active part in the planning of the work being undertaken by the Nottinghamshire County LINK after being asked to participate in a series of independent strategic planning workshops.

Held in six different locations around the county, the LINK invited members of the public to come along to the events and voice concerns over the issues that were affecting them.

These were then incorporated into the Nottinghamshire County LINK workplan as the LINK's priorities for that year. Nottinghamshire County LINK is currently working on 11 different projects arising from this plan and directly shaped by the people of Nottinghamshire with the support of a number of local groups and networks.

GOOD NEWS

BUILDING LOCAL SKILLS

LINKs members have been able to build their skills, increase their self esteem and confidence, and become more closely involved in their health and social care issues thanks to training programmes delivered by Nottinghamshire County LINK.

A number of events have been held, all of which have been well received by those that took part. In fact, as a result of this training, two participants have decided to become more involved and have applied to become Board members for Nottinghamshire County LINK.



“ During the past year Nottinghamshire County LINK has made great strides and empowered many of its residents to have a stronger local voice. ”
Jane Stubbings, chair, Nottinghamshire County LINK

Shropshire LINK



INTRODUCTION

A VALUABLE INDEPENDENT LINK

Since the LINK was formed, the people of Shropshire, health and social care organisations, and local authorities have all worked well together in helping to improve local services. Known as the Community Involvement in Care and Health (CInCH) the LINK has also benefited from a positive working relationship with the host organisation, the Carers Federation, giving purpose and structure to the LINK's work.

After initial difficulties engaging with the local community, which had become exhausted by constant consultations, the last 12 months has proved much more positive. CInCH has also actively sought out opportunities to meet with the general public, attending several farmers' markets and a number of key local events including the Cosford Airshow, Shropshire County Show, Newport Show and The Shrewsbury Flower Show, with positive results.

Alongside this, the LINK is working closely with several charity groups that represent the public's views on CInCH's Public Attitudes Panel which is looking at local trends in health and social care.

Through the establishment of important local networks such as these, CInCH is working hard to provide a valuable independent link between the local people and those who run the health and social care services of Shropshire.

CASE STUDY

CInCH PREVENTS SLIP UP

CInCH has been able to help make changes that have improved patients' health and safety at the Head and Neck Ward of the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Patients were worried about slipping and harming themselves, particularly after surgery, on the wet floor in the shower area. CInCH sent a letter of concern to the health and safety manager at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and the matter was investigated.

It turned out that a partial drain blockage was causing some flooding and leading to floors becoming slippery. The drain was cleaned and the problem resolved, but the health and safety manager at the hospital also arranged for the non-slip dimple-effect flooring in the shower rooms to be extended into the changing room, thereby making it less likely that a patient would slip over and injure themselves.

GOOD NEWS

SHOWCASING THE WORK OF LINKs

The Finland Health Service is looking to set up an arrangement similar to the LINKs in an area of Finland and has approached CInCH to learn more.

Currently using a system similar to Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPIs) they are keen to learn more about how LINKs are set up, and how they sit within the community, the local councils and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

Keen to share ideas and best practice, CInCH has invited around 25 students to visit from Finland and learn more about the LINK first hand; they will also meet with Shropshire Council and Shropshire PCT to gain a full overview of how LINKs can make a difference.

“ The Carers Federation's local support to CInCH, the Shropshire LINK, is highly valued by the LINK members and recognised by the council. Whilst there has been a period of learning and bedding-in for the Host and the LINK a strong and supportive working relationship has developed between the local host team and CInCH. ”
Tom Dodds – performance manager, Community Services Directorate, Shropshire Council

VALUE OF LINKS

LOCAL, INDEPENDENT AND INCLUSIVE

This Impact Report has shown the value of LINKs in terms of their success in bringing about genuine change on many levels.

None of this would have been possible without the members themselves, and every one of these ten LINKs has gone to great lengths, supported by Carers Federation as host, to seek out, listen to and act upon the views and experiences of local people.

This is where the true strengths of the LINKs lie. Only by actively engaging with every section of the community, providing opportunities to discuss issues and work together, can real change be made in local health and social care services.

And only by using a completely independent body such as the LINK, to consult with and act on the views of these individuals and organisations, can local health and social care service providers have the confidence to know they are delivering the services local people need, want and expect.

All this relies on the creation of positive relationships between the LINKs and local councils, the NHS and social care providers to help support the decision-making processes around the commissioning and running of local services. Again, without productive partnerships to support the LINKs' work in raising concerns, monitoring and reviewing these local services, none of the success stories outlined within the pages of this Impact Report would have been possible.

In short, in the time since they were first set up, LINKs have demonstrated immense value in creating **a stronger local voice** for our communities.

“The work done by the Blackburn with Darwen LINK is respected and valued, and its importance has been recognised by local residents, groups and organisations including Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as well as regional and national organisations.”

Jean Baxendale, vice chair, Blackburn with Darwen LINK

“The Doncaster LINK has been well supported by Carers Federation; the success of the LINK has been, in part, due to the excellence and commitment of our host team.”

Sheila Barnes, chair, Doncaster LINK

CONTACT US

If you are interested in finding out more about LINKs or getting involved, please get in touch with your nearest LINK which can be found by searching under your postcode or area name on www.nhs.uk/links.

The ten Carers Federation LINKs:

- 1. Blackburn & Darwen LINK**
T: 01254 504985
E: blackburnlinks@carersfederation.co.uk
- 2. Cheshire East LINK**
T: 01606 45920
E: n.garbett@carersfederation.co.uk
- 3. Cheshire West & Chester LINK**
T: 01606 45920
E: n.garbett@carersfederation.co.uk
- 4. Darlington LINK**
T: 01325 380145
E: info@darlingtonlink.co.uk
- 5. Doncaster LINK**
T: 01302 554970
E: admin@carersfederation.co.uk
- 6. Herefordshire LINK**
T: 01432 373604/5/6
E: info@herefordshirelink.org
- 7. Leicestershire City LINK**
T: 0800 731 9432
E: leicesterlinks@carersfederation.co.uk
- 8. Nottinghamshire LINK**
T: 0115 975 4647
E: info@strongerlocalvoice.com
- 9. Middlesbrough LINK**
T: 0800 141 2642
E: enquiries@middlesbroughlink.org.uk
- 10. Shropshire**
T: 01743 343 223
E: j.bridgwood@carersfederation.co.uk





‘A STRONGER LOCAL VOICE’

POSITIVE RESULTS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



CARERS FEDERATION LIMITED

Carers Federation Limited is registered as a company limited by guarantee.
Registered office: 1 Beech Avenue, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham NG7 7LJ
Registered number 3123142 Registered charity number 1050779

www.carersfederation.co.uk

