



Date of meeting	26 August 2008
Title of paper	Communication and participation
Agenda item no	13
Paper number	N
Context	This paper sets the scene for a LINK communication and participation strategy and programme of work. It describes the underlying principles of accessibility, inclusion and genuine participation in Wandsworth LINK and explains that a more detailed proposal will come to the September IE meeting from the newly appointed Executive Assistant, Simonne Reid with the help of MAC consultancy.
Paper prepared by	WCA and MAC.
Action required	For information and discussion

Communication and participation

Background

LINKs are being established in every local authority in England to give a voice to local people about the provision of health and social care services in their borough. Each will have its individual local character as national regulations allow for a good deal of independence. Wandsworth are in the first group of local authorities to have a democratically elected structure and a membership in excess of 200 individuals and organisation. However it is also hoped that LINKs will be effective on a wider regional and national scale. As the 150 LINKs develop so are the ways in which they can share and co-operate to form a national voice.

Recruitment

In order to maximise the potential for LINK to make a positive contribution in Wandsworth, it is important that clear and simple information is provided to people from all sections of the public to encourage them to become members on Wandsworth LINK. Members of Wandsworth LINK can participate and contribute in a variety of ways: receiving information about LINK activities; contributing views and ideas about specific issues and services; participating in special interest groups; representing Wandsworth LINK at local groups, committees and events; and standing for election to the LINK Executive Committee.

Networking

LINK is not intended to take over from existing groups and projects but should be a network which builds on the excellent work of so many existing local organisations. LINK should join up local initiatives and ensure that the voices of service users, their families and carers and

members of the general public get the opportunity to make a contribution to the improvement of health and social care services.

The circulation of LINK information to the public will be part of a recruitment strategy which targets a comprehensive range of individuals and groups living in the borough or registered with a Wandsworth GP. Information will need to be communicated in a variety of ways taking account of peoples' circumstances with regard to sight/hearing impairment, learning disabilities, familiarity with the english language, IT skills and other personal circumstances.

Communication will need to be proactive as many people will not have the free time, interest, mobility or ability to attend public meetings. The message about LINK will need to be taken out to many different sections of the public through community, faith and social groups they are used to attending and to places they usually meet. LINK must also try to reach sections of the public who traditionally take little interest in health and social care, for example young people and people in employment.

Participation

Having caught people's attention and persuaded them to become LINK members it is essential that they be kept in touch with LINK activities and given the opportunity to voice their views, participate in activities and share their experiences of health and social care in the Borough. A wide variety of different methods must to used to keep people in touch with LINK. As well as traditional methods such as the media, newsletters, leaflets and meetings, LINK must use electronic and telephonic communication. The increase in access to the internet by ordinary people of all ages is many times greater in the UK than elsewhere in the world. LINK has to use modern technology to help involve people in the provision of health and social care fit for the 21st century.

Next steps

At the August meeting, IE members will meet Simonne Reid on her first day as full time Executive Assistant with the LINK Host. Simone will be working with the LINK Executive and membership on a daily basis and it will be her job to support and facilitate a LINK programme of work. Of course she will not be doing this alone as she will have the support of the whole WCA team and she will have specialist help from the Moore Adamson Craig Partnership who have extensive local knowledge of health an social care and a wide range of skills in recruitment, representation, promotion, communication and information technology. With the help of MAC, Simonne will be presenting proposals to the September IE meeting for a communications and participation programme that will kick start LINK in Wandsworth. MAC's initial contribution will be paid for from the Host budget and it will be for the IE to decide about further MAC contributions paid for from the disbursement budget. Implementation of the communication and participation programme can start this autumn and will lay the ground for further development in 2009 under the full LINK Executive Committee.