

Protocol for Information Sharing and Working Relationships between
Lewisham LINK & VCS Partners



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Responsibility: <i>Lewisham LINK Executive Committee</i>	Version: <i>1.0</i>
Date of Issue: <i>15.03.11</i>	Review period: <i>TBC</i>

Document Owner

Executive Committee

Lewisham Local Involvement Network

Document Status

Version	Comments/Reason for change	Date	By
1.0			

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Purpose of Protocol

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) have been established to enable the public and local communities to have a voice in how health and social care services are run to that they improve the health and well being of patients and service users. Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) have a statutory right to enter and view most health and social care services. As LINKs evolve into Healthwatch in April 2012 they will have a place on the Health and Wellbeing Boards, influencing the planning, commissioning and delivery of all the health and care services in each borough.

This protocol supports joint working between voluntary and community sector organisations and Lewisham LINK so voluntary and community sector organisations are able to feed through information about if and how health and social care services are failing their clients- so providers know about what needs to be improved.

Lewisham LINK and VCS Partners are committed to working together to ensure

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- Local people are involved in the planning and delivery of local health and social care services
- Local services are of the highest quality and responsive to patient needs
- Issues and concerns are dealt with in a timely and sensitive manner

This protocol has been jointly developed and agreed to describe how the bodies will work together to deliver on this commitment. The protocol also helps to ensure that Lewisham LINK participants and VCS staff and volunteers are supported to deliver their work effectively.

Working Together

Lewisham LINK will use Chief Executives and Chairs of the organisations as the key point of contact for the LINK. The LINK has identified the LINK Development Manager as the key point of contact for the voluntary and community sector.

In order to ensure queries and issues are resolved quickly, formal communication will be via these nominated leads. It is recognised that by working together many informal connections will be made between LINK participants and VCS organisations and this is welcomed.

The LINK is represented on the Healthier Select Committee, statutory sector partnership board meetings and the Health and Social Care Forum.

Legal Context of Working Together

NHS policy is clear. Users must be involved at all stages of planning, development and provision of health services. Legal duties to involve and consult local people in service planning and delivery are placed on the statutory sector via legislation such as the Health and Social Care Act and the Race Relations Amendment Act. The statutory sector must discharge these duties itself, and part of achieving this does and must involve liaison with the LINK.

Section 242(1B)

“Each relevant English body must make arrangements, as respects health services for which it is responsible, which secure that users of those services, whether directly or through representatives, are involved (whether by being consulted or provided with information, or in other ways) in –

- a) the planning of the provision of those services,
- b) the development and consideration of proposals for changes in the way those services are provided, and

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- c) decisions to be made by that body affecting the operation of those services.”

Also, service providers have a duty to respond to LINKs:

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 makes provision about the establishment of LINKs. Section 242 of the NHS Act 2006 places a duty on services-providers to respond to local involvement networks

Statutory guidance highlights the importance of rigorous and systematic patient and public involvement in every aspect of the health service.

The LINK has the right to undertake visits to any premises controlled or operated by the statutory sector for the purposes of enter and view. The visit can be related to the premises and/or the services or facilities contracted by the statutory sector including social care settings, GPs, dentists, pharmacists, and optometrists.

The Health and Social Care Bill 2010 makes provision for GP consortia to work closely with Healthwatch on embedding patient and public engagement in commissioning decisions.

Work Plan

Voluntary and community sector partners agree to share concerns and issues regarding health and/ social care services with the LINK including:

- Assessments
- Community Care
- Primary Care
- Acute and Secondary Care
- Residential and Nursing Home Care

Developing an understanding of services will require the sharing of information. The LINK is committed to responding quickly to concerns and issues raised by the VCS on behalf of their members.

Promoting Involvement and Engagement

- The LINK will work together with the VCS and the statutory sector to promote service user, patient and public involvement in Lewisham in health and social care.
- The LINK will ensure that its participants and local people are aware of the involvement work of the statutory sector and support and promote engagement in the activities of health and social care.

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- The LINK will articulate local health concerns and ensure that these are reflected in local health plans and commissioning structures.
- The LINK will provide clarity regarding national priorities, where these impact at the local level

Complaints and Review of Protocols

- In the event of a complaint relating to conduct on any side, the issue will be raised with the Lewisham LINK Development Manager and the identified lead for the relevant VCS organisation.
- The protocol will be reviewed regularly to ensure they assist effective joint working.

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