

## 1<sup>st</sup> REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEWISHAM LINK

APRIL – JUNE 2008

Parkwood Healthcare began working on delivering the contract as Host organisation for the Lewisham LINK on 2<sup>nd</sup> April when two Healthcare staff and two Parkwood Leisure staff attended a meeting of the Steering Group, established by the Council as part of its interim arrangements. Work immediately followed on preparing and equipping offices for the LINK at the Ladywell Leisure Centre. Two Parkwood Healthcare staff, one acting as the LINK Development Manager, worked in April and the initial part of May setting up and holding meetings with Council officers to clarify expectations, dealing with legal documents and continued work to establish the office at Ladywell Leisure Centre. In addition, a preliminary meeting was held with the chair of the Healthier Communities Select Committee to discuss and plan the relationship between the committee and the LINK.

We began and made considerable progress on setting up the database of community stakeholders of the LINK using the details provided by the Local Authority and from Voluntary Action Lewisham. Using the information we had gathered we contacted just over 400 individuals, community and voluntary sector organisations, informed them about the LINK and invited them to become members by filling out an Expression of Interest form.

Parkwood Healthcare advertised, short listed and interviewed, with the support of a Steering Group and former PPI Forum member, for the permanent posts in the Host organisation, two full time and two part time. These were advertised locally and the two senior posts were advertised nationally in The Guardian. Short listing and interviews were completed as planned in June and all permanent posts filled before the end of July ahead of the work plan.

The Host took the initiative of inviting all the statutory sector service providers to a meeting and established a Statutory Sector Liaison Group, to create a channel of communication between the LINK and providers and to provide information, assistance and training opportunities for the Network members. The group worked on its Terms of Reference throughout June and achieved this ahead of the work plan. It was agreed that initially the Group would meet monthly and review the frequency of meetings regularly.

All Steering Group members were contacted and invited to share their experience and vision for public consultation and participation for Lewisham. The common themes identified from these interviews were:

- a strong tradition of volunteering and participation from the community within Lewisham

- the need to educate all sections of the community about the LINK and how they can best be involved
- the challenge of bringing together health and social care standards to the same level in light of the fact that health had a head start through the PPI Forums
- the need for volunteers to be given the necessary training and development opportunities to contribute effectively to the work of the LINK
- the need for volunteers to have clear role descriptions to channel their energy and get the best out of their involvement
- the need for the LINK to be truly representative and inclusive to take on the participation and contributions of those groups that are traditionally easy to ignore
- the need for a clear strategy and for continuing work to reach out, establish trust, develop, support and increase the involvement of those from traditionally excluded and minority ethnic groups

Based on the findings of these interviews a draft proposal on a governance structure was prepared. In line with our plan of work, reports on 3 Early Adopter Projects and the learning captured from their experience were included in this proposal to assist the Network members to identify the structure that they believed would suit Lewisham best. Invitations were sent out to the Steering Group members and to all those that had expressed interest in joining the Lewisham LINK to a meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> July to initiate the process of setting up the LINK. To emphasise the role of the Host and the independence of the LINK, for the first time, local authority officers and statutory providers were not invited.

The Host staff attended local, regional and national events: we took part in the Carer's week event to promote Lewisham LINK and had a good response from those who wanted to join the network. We attended a regional meeting organised by PPIX (patient public involvement experience) as well as a London LINK network meeting organised by the National Centre for Involvement.