

## LINK Interim Steering Grp – 27<sup>th</sup> March 08

### **Present:**

Andi Parker	Involvement Officer, Council – Chair
Lyn Boyle	Planning & Dev Mgr, Council
Ray Venus	Resident & Community Care Forum
Kay Parker	Resident
Arthur Scott	Resident
Bill Llewellyn	Resident
Ian Mason	Resident
Alex Tate	Gateshead People
Frank Gallagher	Resident & Gateshead People
DA Henley	Hospital Forum
HF Stookes	Hospital Forum
Ester Ward	Older People's Assembly
Jane White	Peer Mentor – Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health
Robert Stearman	User Development, Pathways
Christine Squires	PCT Forum, Resident
Graeme Lyall	Carers Association
Elsie Johnson	Carer
Janice Todd	Carer
Annie Murphy	GVOC – LINK Host
Gev Pringle	GVOC – LINK Host

### **Apologies:**

Sue Taylor	Sight Service
Raj Kwar	BME Carers Worker
Anya Simpson	Mental Health User Forum

### **1. Introduction & Context:**

Andi thanked everyone for coming, for staying involved throughout the different Stakeholder meetings and to the people who had been involved in the Procurement process. It was with everyone's help and involvement that we have got this far and appointed our Host. GVOC were successful throughout the Tender process & have been offered the role to support the development of the Gateshead LINK.

What is the Gateshead LINK? - At the moment the Gateshead LINK is a disparate group of people. A database of names of people with an interest in Health and/or Social Care issues. We need to get to the point of describing what the LINK is doing, How you have made your decisions, How people can join, How people can challenge the decisions you have made etc etc

There is already lots of guidance from Government to say what the LINK and the Host must do. Andi made copies of some of these documents available. They state:

Every LINK must have procedures in place

- For making relevant decisions
- Who can make relevant decisions
- Dealing with a breach of procedures

All procedures, and any changes to them, must be published & be available to the public

Relevant decisions are:

- Link work plan
- How to spend LINK money
- When to request information & what to ask for
- Which services to enter & view, who is authorised to visit, expectations on return
- Whether to refer a report &/or a recommendation to a commissioner &/or OSC

The Gateshead LINK will need:

- A name – may not include the word(s) LINK
- Membership criteria: formal/informal, working group like theme, special interest like drugs & alcohol, members who only do visits, grps, individuals etc
- Decision making procedures: LINKs meeting, steering grp, working grp, regional grp, issue grps etc
- Member code of conduct
- Ground rules – describing how the LINK will run
- Protocols or quality mark for LINKs consultation, visits, reports
- Clear idea of who's out there & needs to be involved – mapping exercise
- **Support – from your Host and other organisations**
- Engagement Strategy – how your LINK will involve everyone
- Publicity & communications strategy – how people will know about you and what you are doing

## 2. GVOG as Host

Gev started by commending the Council for their thorough commissioning process & involving local people throughout. He said that GVOG were really pleased to have the contract but they recognise the many challenges ahead. Gev & Annie gave made part of the presentation they had given to the Tender Panel. Copies were circulated. Questions and discussion followed.

**Q. What are some of the challenges?** – New concept, no regulated structure so can be creative. Has to be inclusive & will need to involve new people. Looking at the Health & Social Care agenda simultaneously.

**Q. What staff does the LINK have?** – currently the existing GVOG infrastructure of Gev, Annie, finance, development officers in mental health, BME, rural communities, IT support – all of this can be used as & when needed at the beginning. We will recruit staff as & when you decide you are ready for them.

**Q. Looks like you will underspend on staff in the 1<sup>st</sup> year, can this be carried forward?** – Contract not signed yet, this will depend on discussions with the Council. We should have the flexibility to move money between different budget headings but need to have discussion with council, meetings are being planned.

**Q. Is it true the budget reduces each year?** – Yes, all Local Authority grants are based on a number of assumptions, including population projections. Gateshead is expected to have a reducing population over the next 3 years and therefore all grants will reduce based on this assumption. There will always be the option to attract additional funding in the future.

**Q. Don't we need dedicated LINK staff straight away?** As a minimum we will need an admin officer – The LINK will need to identify the staff we need. At the moment we've got the GVOG support, Andi & Lyn from the Council will continue to

support the LINK during development. Once the LINK has prioritised what it wants, for example it needs a Development Officer the LINK will need to decide what they want them to do, direct the job description, recruitment etc but the LINK needs to build the foundations of what it wants first.

**Q. What is the LINK budget?** - £130k in the 1<sup>st</sup> year. Comment was made by a Resident who had been involved in the procurement process that most of this would go on staff and realistically only £20k for the LINK. It was made clear that the LINK would decide on staffing numbers etc – all of this is for LINK discussion. However, the Host has a role to ensure the money is well spent as they have to report to the Local Authority how they are spending the money. The LINK also has to make this info available in their Annual report.

### **3. Task Groups – decide on 3 LINK priorities and what support you need to deliver them**

3 Groups Feedback:

- Policies & procedures
- Management grp to drive the work forward – it should be representative
- Sub groups that are time limited
- Recruitment of staff – work on job profiles
- Profile Raising/Publicity – have a name people understand, brand, include the ‘health & social care’ title as this is what it is
- Mapping – what’s there, where’s the gaps
- Connect this with the “Year of the Volunteer”

Support needed:

- Someone to facilitate meetings
- Take minutes, make them available
- Send information to other people
- Admin – eg set up meetings, venues, refreshments & inform
- Mapping exercise
- Specialist Advice (eg developing protocols) & general advice (eg developing networks, recruitment etc)

Bill suggested, the meeting agreed, these initially fall into 2 broad work streams

**OPERATIONAL** – covers policy, procedures, making decisions, codes of conduct etc

**PROMOTIONAL** – covers raising profile, publicity, linking to other initiatives etc

Ian suggested, the meeting agreed, that we should meet regularly to progress this. Dates for the Working Groups agreed – 17<sup>th</sup> April. Andi to write & inform people on the database & invite their involvement.

*Notes – Andi Parker, CBS Involvement Officer.  
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