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With the re-design of the publicity material, which will be used for the MIU. The poster and leaflet have been reviewed and will clarify when it is appropriate to use the MIU.

In the longer term, provision of urgent care in East Berkshire is the subject of a major service review, which will conclude later this year. It is hoped that the experience gained during the MIU pilot at St Mark's will demonstrate that the treatment of minor injuries locally makes a significant contribution to your healthcare. Members of the LINK are involved in the service review. One question raised by the LINK has now been partially answered. The MIU will remain open until at least September to allow the decision made in June to be implemented without interrupting the service.

Transport Task Force



An ambulance waits for patients at Maidenhead Day Hospital

In response to the concerns on transport issues, raised in a survey of the Royal Borough conducted by the LINK, we have set up a Transport Task Force to identify specific issues for people in the area. We are working with relevant authorities and support groups to make improvements. Your specific input would be much appreciated. We are also seeking people who are willing to participate actively in the Transport Task Force.

According to our initial survey, journeying to and from hospitals is an unsatisfactory experience for many in the Borough. Transport difficulties arise because of lack of availability of ambulance or public transport, congestion, parking, access and cost. Such problems are prevalent and not easy to solve in wider society but are particularly difficult for people who are elderly, disabled or otherwise unwell.

Therefore, we are seeking your opinions and experiences about travelling to and from outpatient clinics in Heatherwood and Wexham and other hospitals in the area. Please tell us of your experience, whatever your mode of transport, that is ambulance, being driven by volunteer groups, buses and taxis, or private car.

Please contact us as shown below

How to contact us



Email: contact@makesachange.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 0102 Monday-Thursday 9-5 pm, Friday 10-4.30pm

Write to: LINKs Freepost RSAC-KULA-LB TX, LINKs Suite 3 First Floor
 26-28 Market Place, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1AP

You can contact Kayleigh by Email: kayleigh.argyle@makesachange.org.uk

Telephone: 0118 936 0090

Local Involvement Network (LINK) Your Voice on Health and Social Services in Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead



Newsletter

April 2009

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Tell us what you think about GP services, mental health services, hospitals, day care, residential homes, older people's services and anything else about health and social care in your area- Good or bad.

Tell us what you would like YOUR LINK to undertake as part of its work programme. The Steering Group need your support to make the LINK effective.

Current priorities include:

- * Care of the elderly
- * Carers
- * Accessibility
- * Mental Health
- * Long Term Care
- * Transport

What has happened so far?

On April 1st 2008 Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forums were abolished and Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) were created. Local Authorities with responsibility for Social Services were obliged to facilitate the formation of a LINK in their area. They were encouraged to appoint a Host organisation to support the formation of the LINK, but could make temporary arrangements for the period that originally ended on September 30th 2008. This date was later slipped to December 31st 2008. The introduction of LINKs was enacted by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2008. Detailed implementation was issued as Statutory Instruments. The Royal Borough appointed Envolve as a temporary Host. Envolve had supported the PPI forums and was therefore able to maintain some momentum.

Volunteers came together to form a Transitional Management Board. This title was considered too formal and soon changed to Steering Group. The Steering Group set about developing a set of governance documents that addressed all aspects of the organisation of the LINK from the payment of volunteer expenses to formal visits to organisations providing health and social care services. It was decided that the LINK was unlikely to attract significant public support until it was seen to be doing something. Two public meetings were held and a survey of people who had expressed an interest in the LINK identified a number of concerns that could be addressed. It was decided that the provision of transport to and from NHS services was a major problem and a group was formed to address this issue. The PCT was about to start a pilot service to treat minor injuries at St Mark's hospital. Because of the high level of public interest, it was decided that the LINK would monitor the pilot.

By September 2008 governance documents had been published and activity had started. The LINK therefore ceased to be a transitional group within the definitions of the legislation and became a formally established LINK in compliance with the Statutory Instruments.

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Group

The members of the Steering Group are:

**Brian Huggett
Doreen Joel
Jazz Khan
Karen Mustard
Michael Copeland
Patricia Dervan
Richard Byrnes
Roger Battye
Tracey Morgan**

The main function of the LINK Steering Group is to develop a work plan based on the priorities established by the Members of the LINK. This will be implemented by adding to the existing task groups.

The Steering Group will choose a Chairman and Vice Chairman and allocate responsibilities for various roles.

happened so far (continued from Page 1)

Several policy decisions have been made including:

- Membership of the LINK is open to all who live or are eligible to receive services within the Royal Borough.
- The name of the LINK is Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead.
- A distinctive Logo is to be used on all materials to develop a local brand image. (This is the heading on this newsletter)
- LINK members prepared to take an active part in activities that interest them from the Reference Group.
- As far as possible decisions will be made by the Reference Group and implemented on their behalf by the Steering Group.
- The LINK will not duplicate or conflict with specialist organisations, but will support them to ensure that they are consulted and their voices are heard.
- Members of the Steering Group will be chosen by the members of the LINK.

In October 2008 Help and Care were appointed as the Host organisation for several LINKs including all the LINKs in Berkshire except Reading. Funding for your LINK in 2009/10 is £88,000, which is provided by The Royal Borough from central government funding. Of this money a little over £12,000 is available for activity controlled by the LINK.

In March 2008 members of the LINK were invited to nominate themselves for the Steering Group. Nine people put themselves forward including five who had previously been members. The Steering Group has the option to co-opt further members. The enhanced Steering Group will meet for the first time on May 1st.

Your Development Officer

Kayleigh Argyle is Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead LINK Development Officer. She has been working for Help and Care for 3 months and has 6 years of experience of working with adults with learning difficulties.

Since she has started, Kayleigh has taken an active role by visiting local health and social care services, groups and individual people of the community to see what they have to say about the health and social care in their area and how best to access it.

The Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead LINK is working to identify the best methods of engaging with the community and would like you to tell us how we can communicate with you.

St Mark's Hospital Minor Injuries Unit



An Advanced Nurse Practitioner treats a patient at the MIU

LINK members were invited (as members of the PCT Health Panel) to comment on the way the MIU was to be set up before it went live in September 2008. Our pleas that the opening be delayed until all the support that was available were not heeded. As a result, information was not freely available. We also requested clear criteria for what would be considered a successful pilot. Criteria were published, but these were far from clear. The Unit was commissioned by Berkshire East Primary Care Trust (PCT*) and is operated by Heatherwood and Wexham NHS Foundation Trust (H&W). It is modelled on the MIU at Heatherwood and has the same management. This approach of using an existing organisation meant that the pilot could start quickly.

The LINK decided to monitor the progress of the MIU and sought involvement in the review process. Reviews were planned after three, six and nine months (the end of the pilot). It was accepted that the review after three months was of limited value as the opening hours were restricted and publicity had not been adequate.

When the Unit opened, LINK members attended the opening and consequently identified a number of issues around the facilities. The area is quite cramped and not all areas that need them have sinks. The staff have adapted to these limitations and they do not pose any risk to patients.

A list of outstanding issues was compiled and sent to the PCT. Responses have been co-ordinated and shared with the LINK Steering Group. The list is kept under constant review and updated as appropriate. Most items have been resolved or have made substantial progress.

Members of the LINK were involved in the review at three months, where, as expected, no real conclusion could be drawn. It looks likely that most criteria will be met at six months. The critical items are:

1. What reduction, if any, has been made to emergency services such as A&E?
2. Are service users satisfied with their treatment?
3. Is the service cost effective?

Item 1 will be answered by examining the records of attendances at the alternative locations and asking patients where they would have gone if the MIU had not existed.

Item 2 will be measured with a questionnaire constructed in co-operation with LINK members. Members of the LINK reference group are invited to assist in administering the questionnaire. Anyone interested should let Kayleigh know. See page 4 for contact information. Volunteers will be contacted again when details are available.

Item 3 is governed by the revenue paid by the PCT to H&W. This will depend on how much it is used.

* The PCT is now known as Berkshire East NHS

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