

Somerset Local Involvement Network

Your voice on health & social care in Somerset



Somerset

L I N K

Autumn 2011
Newsletter

What is a Local Involvement Network? (LINK)

Anyone can contact their Local Involvement Network and let them know their opinions about health and social care - what is good and perhaps what is not so good!

The LINK can then take up these issues with the people who provide the services, to help improve the services they provide.

If you want to tell us your opinions and ideas about services - get in touch!

Welcome to the Somerset LINK Autumn newsletter!

Well it's time to admit it - Autumn is finally here! Our Autumn newsletter contains an update about the work that we've been doing, including our Patient Transport Report, the latest news about HealthWatch and an update from our Enter & View project.

It's a very busy time in health and social care services, as things are changing very rapidly - particularly in how services are commissioned. Our LINK Representatives have been very busy getting to grips with some of the new organisations and groups that are emerging—so in this newsletter, we've got reports from our Reps to give you a flavour of how things are changing for Somerset.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and as always, if you want copies of any of our reports or want to know more about our work, please do get in touch with us (contact details on the back of this newsletter) and we'll be happy to send you more information.

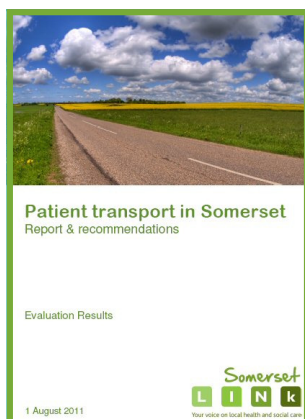
Patient Transport in Somerset: Our Report

Our report on patients' views on transport in Somerset is now complete.

The issue which arose most frequently was a lack of clear information, and we've made sure that our recommendations focus on improving ways of communicating all the travel options for patients (which had us jolly confused too!).

You can read the Recommendations from our transport project on Page 3 of this newsletter.

“NHS Somerset welcomes this evaluation”



“Many thanks for the Somerset LINK's hard work on this report.”
(Somerset County Council)

HealthWatch Update!

In about a year's time, your local LINK will be evolving into local HealthWatch. We've put together a pull-out HealthWatch Briefing Paper inside this newsletter to give you some ideas about what might happen over the next year.

There are still a lot of questions left to answer, but we hope this might address some of the questions that we are being asked about what HealthWatch might look like.

We've had lots of positive feedback about our HealthWatch Briefing Paper - in fact, it's gone positively viral, and we've received requests for it to be distributed to LINKs across the country as well as requests from various PALS teams across the country. It was also distributed at a national conference organised by the Department of Health and the National Association of LINKs Members. So if you haven't yet seen it, now's your chance to have a read!

Local HealthWatch Briefing Paper

Written for the Somerset LINK, September 2011

This paper summarises what we know so far about Local HealthWatch. The picture is not entirely clear, as ideas are developing in a very changeable situation, and much is open to debate! However, this paper attempts to explain some of our guesses about what Local HealthWatch is intended to look like. It also asks some of the questions that still remain unanswered. Most of the information in this paper is based on information in the Health & Social Care Bill that is currently going through parliament - and our best guesses!

“ Local HealthWatch organisations will be the local consumer champion across health and social care. ”

* according to the (not-quite-ready) Health & Social Care Bill, Schedule 16A Section 220A (1)

The things we do: What will stay the same?

Local HealthWatch will retain all involvement and scrutiny functions of the LINK, including:

- ✓ promoting involvement
- ✓ obtaining views
- ✓ monitoring health and care services
- ✓ making reports and recommendations
- ✓ carrying out Enter & View visits.

The things we do: What will be new or different?

- ✓ Local HealthWatch will provide information to support patient choice (responding to questions about information which the PCT PALS teams currently do)
- ✓ There will be a HealthWatch representative on Local Health & Wellbeing boards: These boards will be made up of local councillors, council officers and GP commissioners and will be responsible for the Joint



Patient Transport in Somerset:

Our recommendations

Over the last year, we've been gathering people's views about transport for patients in Somerset. We've compiled our findings into a report, which we've sent to the commissioners of transport services.

If you'd like a copy of our full report, please let us know and we will be happy to send you one. Here's a summary of our recommendations:

Recommendation 1.

Treat patients in the community where possible

Patients commented that they are having to travel large distances for minor procedures that could be dealt with at their surgery or nearer home. As one patient said: "With limited funds, paying £50 to go and blow three times into a tube and then come home is very expensive." Ensuring that patients are treated nearer to home should be prioritised: any treatment that can be carried out at their GP surgery, local community hospital or medical centre would be preferable to travelling to a large hospital further away. Consideration should be given to whether video-clinics may be a suitable alternative to transporting patients long distances for healthcare appointments.

Some patients may be putting off health appointments due to the cost of travelling to hospitals that are some distance from home. These issues should also be considered when considering the housing needs for elderly people.

Recommendation 2.

A single point of access for booking

A one-stop-shop for patient transport services would simplify the transport booking system and make it easier for patients and healthcare professionals to find information. This number must be staffed by individuals who have been trained in dealing with patients and carers sensitively. The telephone service should also allow patients and carers to leave messages if the line is particularly busy and staff should return calls within a set time. Consideration should also be given to permitting booking via email or text message, particularly for deaf users of patient transport.

Recommendation 3.

Make information available online

The most common theme was the difficulty of accessing information about patient transport and about the eligibility criteria. We recommend that a website should be set up to make information about patient transport more widely available.

The website should be tested by users and should:

- Explain the criteria for free patient transport;
- Explain the Healthcare Travel Costs scheme and the eligibility criteria;
- Provide a very simple directory of patient transport providers, particularly community transport services which may be accessed by people ineligible for free or reduced-cost transport;
- Clearly explain the cost to the patient of each type of transport;
- Clearly explain the operating hours of each service;
- Explain in simple terms the difference between the providers.

Recommendation 4.

Publish a Patient Transport Directory

Many patients will not have access to the internet and it is therefore essential that a printed directory is available for patients that contains the information available on the website: such a directory was published by Somerset County Council until a few years ago. This directory should be made widely available, for example in doctor's surgeries and hospital clinics. The directory should cover all of the points mentioned above for the website, and also be made available in large print.

Recommendation 5.

Give consideration to carers

Special consideration should be given to carers, both for those who may not be able to be away from home for long periods of time and for those who may need to travel with their cared-for person on a journey. A carer should not have to travel separately to their cared-for person. It is particularly important that carers are properly informed about the options for patient transport, and we recommend that when registered carers are referred for treatment at a hospital, they are sent information about sitting services and a copy of the Patient Transport Directory mentioned above. This process should be automated into the electronic patient record system if possible.

What happens next?

Our report has been sent to the commissioners of transport services. We've had responses from NHS Somerset and Somerset County Council, following the publication of our report.

Our report will be used to inform decisions about the transport service as it develops over the next few months. We will be making sure that your views are represented and inform any decisions made about patient transport services – particularly around information and access.

Starting a Somerset Neurological Alliance

The Somerset LINK is helping the South West Alliance of Neurological Organisations (www.swano.org) to coordinate a Somerset Neurological Alliance for patients and carers with an interest in neurological conditions.

This includes things like **Multiple sclerosis, Motor Neurone Disease and Parkinson's disease**. Local Neurological Alliances exist around the country to enable people with long term neurological conditions and their families/carers to come together to speak with one voice about issues that affect them. For more information please contact Lucy at the Somerset LINK Office.

LINK Rep wanted for Bridgwater Bay Patient Forum

Over the last year, the Primary Care Trust (NHS Somerset) has been working to establish local Health Forums in different areas of Somerset. These brings together patient representatives with health providers and commissioners, including GPs, to discuss local issues and improve communications and understanding between patients and health professionals.

A new forum for the Bridgwater Bay area is being set up with an initial meeting at East Quay Medical Centre at 6:30pm on Tuesday 29 November 2011. If you are interested in knowing more about this, please get in touch with us at the LINK office.

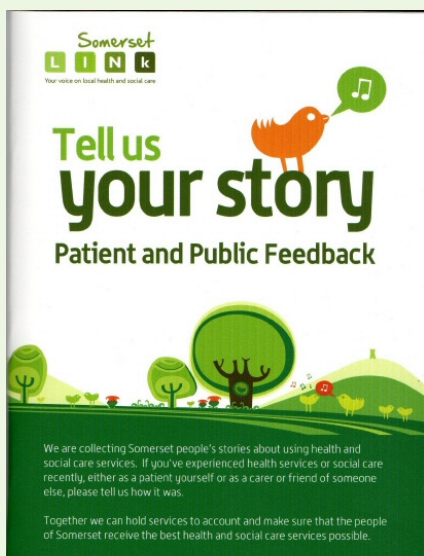
Tell your story...

We're collecting patient stories!

We really want to find out what's happening across Somerset in GP surgeries, hospitals, clinics, care homes – and all the other health and social care services across the county.

We're collecting stories via our leaflets (below) which we've put in surgeries, clinics and health centres across Somerset. We'll be telling your stories to the people that run the services.

We're also looking for anyone who either wants to tell their story, or wants to help us distribute surveys – so if that might be you, please get in touch.



What DO we do?

We've been very busy over the summer and have been out and about across the county, keeping up with goings-on across both health and social care—but we're often asked, What DO we do? So here's a little run-down of our goings-on over the summer:

We've met with Somerset County Council to discuss their involvement strategy, presented to the Health & Wellbeing Task & Finish Group about patient and public involvement, met with students at Huish Episcopi school for a joint project to interview carers, met with carers' groups, presented to the Expert Patients Programme graduates about patient involvement, given a talk to the Disability Community Champions, ran a workshop for the South West Alliance of Neurological Organisations, met with Carers' Champions from Edington Surgery, Ryalls Park Surgery, Wincanton Surgery and Penn Hill Surgery and met with representatives from St. John Ambulance, local Carers UK branches, Mind in Taunton & West Somerset, South Somerset Mind and Headway to talk about carers' services. We've attended Somerset County Council's Carers' Strategy Group, Somerset Racial Equality Council's Black and Minority Ethnic Mental Health meeting, the Taunton branch of the National Autism Society AGM, Somerset County Council Scrutiny meetings, Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust AGM, NHS Somerset Equality Delivery System meetings and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Technical Working Groups.

We've held stalls at a Carers' UK Day in Frome, an older people's day in Bridgwater and a public event on Exmoor. We caught up with the Somerset Patient Participation Group Chairs at their Network meetings (and have set up a PPG Chairs Forum at www.linkedin.com). We've been interviewed on BBC Somerset radio on nursing staff communication, mixed sex wards and a carers report by the Princess Royal Trust.

Our LINK Reps have also been busy. We held LINK Steering Group meeting in Hambridge and also in Frome. At our September meeting, we discussed Somerset County Council's involvement plans at our meeting, and submitted a response from the LINK. We've attending Enter & View training in Bristol, a HealthWatch Briefing at Hambridge, training workshops on Real Involvement and workshops on Equality & Diversity. They've attended and reported from the West Somerset Health Forum, NHS Somerset Board Meetings and AGM, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group meetings, the North Sedgmoor Health Forum, the Somerset Partnership Patient and Public Involvement Meeting and a meeting about Trauma Centres in the south-west (and if you want to read any of their reports from these meetings, please let us know and we can post them to you).

Thanks to all who have welcomed us and to all who give their time getting involved with health and social care services on behalf of the people of Somerset!!!

Updates from your LINK Reps

We've managed to persuade some of our very lovely LINK Reps to write a little bit about the fab work they've been doing on behalf of patients and the public across Somerset. Thanks to all who contributed (and we will get the rest of you next time....)



Eileen Tipper

Somerset's Clinical Commissioning Group: LINK Representative Eileen Tipper

As part of the Government's reform of health and social care, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), who commission health services, will be replaced by 'Clinical Commissioning Groups' – groups of GPs and other health professionals. In Somerset, our LINK Patient Representative Eileen Tipper has been attending the Clinical Commissioning Group meetings.

"The Clinical Commissioning Group was set up on 1 June 2011, as a sub-committee of the PCT Board. It's membership comprises GP delegates from the nine Somerset Federations, Practice Managers, Representatives from Somerset County Council, a representative from the Local Medical Committee, Seconded PCT Directors – and a representative from the LINK.

Plans are being put together for the delegation of commissioning functions from the Primary Care Trust (NHS Somerset) to the Clinical Commissioning Group. Over a quarter of the Somerset health budget (£222 million) will be passed over to the Clinical Commissioning Group by 31 March 2012.

Somerset has a record of practice based commissioning and is also in a strong financial position - making it well placed to move forward on the reforms."



Diane Jepson

Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board: LINK Representative Diane Jepson

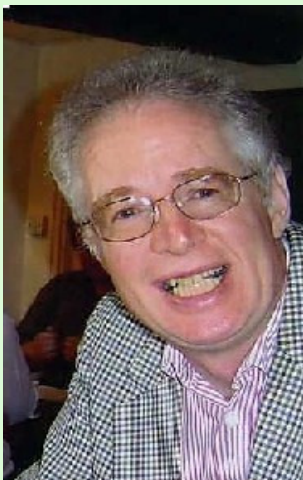
New Health and Wellbeing Boards are a key part of the new health and social care world. Health and Wellbeing Boards will be executive decision making boards with responsibility for establishing a local view of the needs of the population and to support joint commissioning of health, social care & public health services. The membership of the board will comprise councillors, local Clinical Commissioning Group representatives, the Director of Public Health, Director of Adult Social Services and Children's

Services and a representative of Local HealthWatch (for now, the LINK). The Health and Wellbeing Board has just been set up in 'shadow' form and the LINK Steering Group has chosen Wells resident Diane Jepson as the public LINK representative.

"October 31st is the start of Somerset LINK public representation at the first meeting of the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board. To do this effectively and efficiently I need the people of Somerset stating their collective issues both good and bad directly to the LINK.

The new Health & Wellbeing Board will no doubt be a testing experience in structure, representation and decision making. It will be evolving throughout the next 18 months into what I would hope would be a Board truly representative of what Somerset people deserve: determining services which ensure best practice within resource limitations (of which there will always be) in an open and honest manner."

Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: Nigel Engert, Public Governor (South Somerset)



Nigel Engert

"I have only been a Public Governor of Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust for a few months, but have been struck by the rapid changes currently taking place. Most significantly, the Trust assumed responsibility for Somerset Community Health on 1st August, almost trebling in size at the same time, so now has the opportunity to develop a fully integrated service for patients with physical as well as mental health problems.

I am particularly interested in this process as Wincanton, where I live, has a Community Hospital and a Day hospital and social day care for older people with mental health needs (Ridley House) on the same site which have hitherto been separately managed. A brand new GP Medical Centre is also due to open later this year about half a mile away, so there are further possibilities for joint working. All this should produce useful benefits for patients in south east Somerset, with a wider range of local services and less need to travel the 17 miles to Yeovil.

I have also taken part in training, funded by the Trust but provided by the Foundation Trust Network, designed to give myself and seven other Public Governors the skills and understanding necessary to enable us to recruit Non-Executive Directors. I am still coming to grips with the relationship between them and ourselves as well as our role in acting as both advocates for the Trust as well as channels of communication between the general public and the Trust and its management.

Needless to say, there is a huge amount of information to absorb before one can decide what is essential and what is not. Keeping on top of all the changes in the NHS is far from straightforward. With an even greater emphasis on patient choice but a considerably reduced budget, we are all going to have to keep on our toes over the next few years to ensure that standards do not fall.

Update from the Clinical Commissioning Group: Tony Hampson & Susan Harris, Patient & Public Engagement Managers



Tony Hampson

Somerset now has a 'shadow' GP led Clinical Commissioning group that is working under the umbrella of Somerset PCT to bring about the changes in the way that the Health Service is provided in Somerset. It will be assume it's full powers when transitional arrangements are complete in October 2012

One of the most far reaching changes is the importance attached to patient and public involvement in shaping the services that will be available. How can the new commissioning organisation set up structures and processes that will best capture the views of patients, carers and other organisations? We want your views about this, to help us design our 'blueprint' for involvement in Somerset.

Public events have been taking place to share information and to capture views but if you have not had the chance to be heard you can e-mail:

publicandpatientvoice@somerst.nhs.uk or telephone Patient and Public Engagement Manager Susan Harris at Summervale Medical Centre on 01460 52354.

All about.... **Enter and View**

The Somerset LINK Enter and View Team have been busy visiting and reporting on a cross section of homes offering residential care for older persons across Somerset. Nursing homes, dementia care homes and residential homes large and small were selected from Wells to Minehead and Wellington to Bridgwater.

Somerset is a popular place to retire and has one of the highest number of population aged over 65 in the UK. As we are living longer the need for residential services increases and the need to ensure care homes offer quality services that show residents dignity and respect is paramount.

Aims of the project

The aims of our Enter and view project are to:

- Capture an overview of Residential and Nursing Homes for older persons as observed and discussed with staff, residents and visitors to the home;
- Identify good practice relating to the provision of care in the home;
- Identify good examples of dignity in care as outlined by the Social Care Institute for Excellence publication: 'The Dignity Factors'; and
- Seek ways to ensure these are shared among care home providers.
- Make recommendations for investigation or improvements as and where observed.

The Enter and View team talk with residents, visitors and staff about what it's like living in the care home with a focus on Dignity in Care.



Good Practice examples

Here are just a few of our good practice examples we have identified so far:

- Offering one to one time with residents on a regular basis compiling life story books and really getting to know residents. Knowing a residents history and preferences can really make a big difference to the personalised care they receive.
- Including local groups and services in the home such as the Cub Scouts who sometimes offer a Christmas postal service, or the Rotary Club who have provided residents in a care home near Yeovil with transport to see the a local school play.
- Ensuring that portion size and meal preferences of residents are observed. Some homes give two smaller portions to residents who may take longer to eat to ensure their meal remains hot and does not need to be re-heated.
- Residents are able to choose where they wish to eat and some who have difficulty eating may prefer to take meals in their room.
- Regular meeting with residents and visitors involving activities staff and kitchen staff are important ways to involve people in the running of the home. Some homes also have suggestion boxes and circulate regular satisfaction surveys to residents and relatives. Other homes have their own friends of the care home groups who get involved with collecting feedback from residents and raising funds for additional activities.

As wells as gathering good practice examples we also come across issues that are common to lots of homes. For example, many homes have had difficulties when residents are discharged from hospital.

Another common issue is many residents cannot afford to get out and about as much as they would like to. Some homes have taken creative and active steps to lesson these problems and it is important that we share these good practice examples with other homes. Sometimes it's the little things that can make a big difference.

As the project progresses we continue to find ways of sharing good practice with as many residential and nursing homes as possible. If you would like to see some of the reports we have written please get in touch or visit our website at www.somersetlink.org.uk.

Jono Yelland
Enter & View staff team lead

Carers' Services in Somerset

Following our evaluation of the Somerset GP Surgeries' Carers' Champion scheme, NHS Somerset and Somerset County Council have confirmed that this project will continue, and will form part of a new Carers' Support Service for Somerset.

The proposal in Somerset is to commission a Carers Support Service. This will be based in the nine GP Federation areas. (There are 76 GP surgeries in Somerset, and these are grouped into nine 'Federations' or groups.) The Carers' Support Service will work closely with Carers Champions and support local GP practices by developing locally based support, such as information and advice, linking with the health and social care services, linking with voluntary groups, providing training, emotional support and crisis prevention.

The service will be based on many of the recommendations from the Carers Appraisal that was carried out in Somerset in 2010, which sought views from carers across the county about what they wanted from services.

The Carers Support Service will be a new service - separate and distinct from the 'adult social care statutory assessment service' (which will continue to be delivered by local adult social care teams from Somerset County Council).

Once established, the Health and Well Being Board and Local HealthWatch will have a role to take forward recommendations of monitoring carers' services. The Carers Partnership Board - a new board lead by carers that is being set up at the end of this year - will also monitor services, have an overview of the carers' budget and develop and inform strategies.

Carers' Service Consultation

Over the next few months, Somerset County Council will be consulting with carers, collecting their views about what they would like from the new service. The Somerset LINK will be helping to distribute this - so watch this space for more information.

Our new report: Supported Housing Providers' views of needs in Somerset

During June and July 2011 we spoke to supported housing providers to get their views on supported housing needs in Somerset for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

Joint Strategic Needs Assessments look at the health and wellbeing needs of local people in order to inform commissioning decisions. JSNA's help commissioners answer the question, 'What services do local people we need?'. They are local documents looking at the local area - and every local authority has to have one.

In order to add more local feedback to the Somerset JSNA, the LINK heard from twelve Supported Housing providers, who in total support around 2,450 people across Somerset each year. The people that the housing providers support include mental health service users, people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities, older people, young people, people suffering from domestic abuse, ex-offenders and single homeless people.

The responses to the survey show that there is a great deal of concern about reductions to funding and how the current financial climate will impact upon both clients and providers over the next three years.

In general it was felt that housing providers had good relationships between each other and with commissioners, although it was felt that more joined-up partnership working would improve efficiencies and services to clients.

There was concern that there is insufficient affordable moving-on housing available, and that there was inconsistency of service provision across the county. In general however, concerns largely focused on the financial climate. A common theme was concern that a 'perfect storm' may be brewing in supported housing where client's personal circumstances were being pressurised (for example, in reduction of social security benefits) at a time when service provision is being reduced due to the current financial situation. There is also concern that while general provision may be being maintained, provision at either end of the spectrum is being insufficiently supported.

Our report will be included in the Somerset JSNA, which is currently being put together. If you would like a copy of the full LINK report, please contact us and we will be happy to pop a copy in the post.



Calling North Petherton patients!

North Petherton Surgery is setting up a new Patient Participation Group and is looking for interested patients to join. If this is your surgery, and you want to get more involved, contact Lesley for more information on Lesley.Mildren@northpetherton.nhs.uk or contact Lucy at the LINK office.

Latest National Consultation:

'Caring for our future'

The Department of Health has launched a three-month engagement exercise called 'Caring for our future', seeking views on the future of care and support. You can find out more at caringforourfuture.dh.gov.uk or ask at the Somerset LINK office for the consultation documents to be sent to you.

Dates for your diary ...

LINK Steering Group meetings

Want to join us in improving services for the people of Somerset?

You are welcome to come along to any of our meetings and have your say or find out more about our work. If you'd like to come along, please let us know so we can make sure that we have the right number of papers (and biscuits!).

Tuesday 25th October 2011

Public meeting at Minehead Community Hospital: LINK meeting from 11am-2pm followed by a tour of the new hospital. You are welcome to come along to any part of the meeting.

Tuesday 6th December 2011

11am: Steering Group meeting at our Hambridge office – all welcome.

Tuesday 17th January 2012

11am: Steering Group meeting at our Hambridge office – all welcome.

Tuesday 21st February 2012

11am: Steering Group meeting in Taunton (venue to be decided) – all welcome.



How to contact us

By email:

stephen.letchford@makesachange.org.uk
jonathon.yelland@makesachange.org.uk
lucy.nicholls@makesachange.org.uk
theresa.raymont@makesachange.org.uk

On the Web:

www.somersetlink.org.uk

By telephone:

Office: 01458 250674

Our office is in Hambridge, but we are often out and about, so please leave a message if we aren't in, or ring:

The LINK helpline:

0300 1110102 (local rate)

By post:

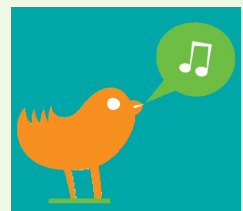
FREEPOST RSAC-KSRE-CZCE
Somerset LINK, Unit 2,
Bowden's Business Centre
Hambridge, Langport
Somerset, TA10 0BP

On Twitter:

Follow our tweets on:
www.twitter.com/SomersetLINK

On Facebook:

Find us on Facebook by searching for the 'Somerset LINK' group.



Sign up for our e-news!

Want to read our monthly updates via email and keep up to date with our work?

Send an email to:

somersetlink@makesachange.org.uk
and we'll add you to our mailing list.