

# **Doncaster LINK Communications Strategy**

## **September 2009**

**Communications Strategy**

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## Communications Strategy – Doncaster LINK

01/09/2009

### Current Status of Doncaster LINK

Doncaster LINK has an Executive Board which was elected in April 2009. The Board consists of individual representatives and organisational representation. The Executive Board are responsible for providing the overall direction and governance of the LINK. This is carried out by the Board themselves and then through a process of mandating working groups to carry out specific tasks. The specific working groups at this time are-

**GP Access Group**- A group formed to look at how the public access GP services with a view to producing recommendations to improve service.

**Hospital Discharge Group** - A group formed to look at the service received by the public once they are discharged from hospital. A report to be produced to highlight recommendations to improve the patients' experience

**Information and Communications and Engagement Group(ICE)**- A group set up to deliver the communications and engagement strategy of Doncaster LINK.

### Communications Aims and Objectives

The LINK aims to engage members of the public in consultation and involve the communities that it will represent. The aim is to develop key strategic partnerships with existing organisations and service providers to ensure that the message is communicated widely and reaches those members of the community that are considered 'seldom heard'.

The overall objective of the communications strategy is to engage local people, consult the public, develop widely accessible information channels and involve local people in the LINK.

The LINK exists to represent the public views on Health and Social Care. The purpose of the strategy is to enable the community's voices to be heard, in order to emulate the LINKs work plan to act upon those views.

### Communications Management and Support

The Communications Strategy will be implemented by the Information, Communications and Engagement (ICE) group with the support of the Host. The ICE group will receive

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support from the LINK Team Community Engagement Worker, Team Leader and Administrator.

## **Target Audience**

The LINK aims to target all people living in the Doncaster area. In order to maximize the chances of reaching as wide an audience as possible the LINK will focus on the following groups and individuals:

- Voluntary and Community Organisations and their Service Users
- Older People and their Representatives
- Disabled Groups and Individuals
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Community
- The Housebound
- Groups and Individuals identified as 'Hard to Reach'
- Patient's / Service Users of Health and Social Care Services

## **How to reach the Target Communities**

The LINK will use a variety of communications tools that enable clear accessible 'dialogue' with the target communities. The information provided by the LINK will aim to be accessible in a variety of formats that consider the differing needs of the community. This includes: information in Multi – lingual, Audio, Print and Electronic Formats as well as other methods of communication identified as relevant to the target communities and affordable to the LINK.

The LINK will develop marketing tools including local media, press and Specialist print publications.

## **Doncaster LINK Priorities**

The Doncaster LINK has developed 'Working Groups' to carry out specific pieces of work on behalf of the Executive Board. The current priorities include;

- Consultation with the community about the work of the LINK

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- Working on specific projects highlighted by the community
- Reaching out to communities to discover issues and broadening membership

## **Awareness and Consultation**

The first phase of communication has been defined as the Awareness and Consultation Phase. This work will be continuous throughout the life of the LINK and the initial work done in this area will form part of the LINKs Information Strategy and ensure that the public are aware of:

- What the LINK is
- Who it represents and how
- How to get involved in the local LINK
- Where to find information on the work of the LINK

This work will involve distributing information face to face, by email bulletins and with a leaflet campaign. This work will also involve going out into the community and engaging local people. In addition to the use of local press and publications the following communication 'Tools' and Methods can be used:

- ❖ Consultation letter and leaflet designed and distributed across Doncaster including all public places including health establishments, existing organisations and so forth
- ❖ Research demographics – in particular statistics and information on 'The seldom heard groups' and use information to inform the strategy
- ❖ Engage with existing voluntary and community organisations working with groups that are 'easy to ignore'
- ❖ Write and Distribute an article (Introducing the LINK) – to include interview with representative of the Executive Board
- ❖ Inform local press of LINK
- ❖ LINK representative engage in a series of interviews with local press and radio
- ❖ Develop display stands with LINK 'message' and use Community Engagement workers and LINK representative to exhibit information and engage community at local events
- ❖ Organise and manage community events to launch the LINK – Community Coffee Morning or Community Conference and Workshop Seminars for example.
- ❖ Develop a system to capture and file information received from consultation.
- ❖ Ongoing presentations to community groups and organisations

Phase 1 will ensure that the group has sufficient information to represent a diverse community with differing needs.

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The group will raise awareness about its background, current status and future goals and objectives.

The group will involve the local community in the development of the LINK through consultation, engagement and information sharing.

The group will establish good media relations for the long term exposure of work and use the press and media to engage the public's interest. They can also be used to raise community debates on health and social care and encourage people 'to have a say'.

The group will establish a visual 'presence' and identity in Doncaster.

## **Engagement and Work Planning**

The second phase of the strategy will see the LINK establish its Name and Working Strategy. This phase will be used to distribute information to the public and build a work plan for the LINK. The Communication 'tools' and 'channels' recommended are as follows:

- ❖ LINK Promotional Campaign including posters, leaflets/booklet, displays stands and media
- ❖ Distribute articles, press release and advertorials to local press and industry publications, engage media in interviews.
- ❖ Continue to raise awareness and engage local people with outreach work implemented by Community Engagement Worker including attending exhibitions and engaging with existing groups and service providers.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Communications Strategy can be monitored on a regular basis through meetings and correspondence. However official methods for monitoring and evaluating can include the following:

- ❖ Database of working groups and participants can be used to monitor numbers of people involved and group capacity. It can also tell the LINK where people have interests and / or expertise
- ❖ Feedback forms will help to monitor the public interest in a particular issue or work plan, these can be in any LINK publication and even as 'tear off' slips on a leaflet or booklet.
- ❖ Community conferences will help to raise awareness and debate or capture the 'mood' about what issues the community want to pursue, they can also provide a channel for the LINK to feedback on an issue.
- ❖ Market Research / Consultation

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## Press and Media

The Press and Media set out below are just a few relevant to Doncaster. The suggestions below would be used as and when relevant dependent upon the campaign and respective audience:

Press & Publications	Radio & TV
Doncaster News	Trax FM
Doncaster Free Press	Sine FM
	BBC Local News