

Doncaster LINK

Engagement Strategy

Purpose of the Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that all sections of the local community have the opportunity to participate effectively in the Local Involvement Network (LiNk) and to pro-actively decide how and when they will become involved. The definition of local community includes individuals, residents, patients, carers and users of services and local groups and organisations.

The Doncaster LiNk Community Engagement Strategy will link to a number of other relevant strategies and documents within Doncaster, including the Doncaster Local Area Agreement. The LiNk will work closely with all statutory Engagement plans to ensure best practice and good working relationships.

Definitions

Community participation can be defined as:

“The creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development”.

This definition fits in well with the goals of the Doncaster LiNk and in addition, participation can be broken down into five different levels of community involvement and participation.

Information

Providing everybody with a range of information about what is happening and how they might become involved.

Consultation

Creating opportunities for involvement where people’s views and ideas can be shared.

Deciding Together

Encouraging ideas and new ways of thinking and deciding how people can best carry forward these ideas.

Acting Together

Working together as a partnership to follow through the ideas and translate them into action.

Supporting Independent Community Interests

Determining how the local community can carry forward the work identified, with additional support and guidelines.

The development of the Doncaster LINK could be seen to be within these five levels of participation starting out with general information to all members of the community, supporting the decision of the community to become directly involved and to determine how they will act and respond. The overall purpose of the Local Involvement Network could be seen to be supporting independent community interests, with the Doncaster LINK itself determining how it can carry forward the work identified with additional support and guidelines.

Existing Mechanisms for Community Engagement

A range of existing processes currently exist for involving individuals and groups in the decision making process. Each key organisation, including statutory and voluntary agencies, has its own strategy for engagement, involvement and participation. The Doncaster LINK needs to build on existing mechanisms and opportunities for involvement rather than creating new systems and processes.

In order to develop a pro-active Community Engagement Strategy the Doncaster LINK will need to:

- Map existing mechanisms for involvement and participation across key agencies, including the Local Authority, NHS and the voluntary and community sector.
- Work with voluntary and community sector organisations to identify internal mechanisms for user involvement and participation and examine how the Doncaster LINK can support these arrangements.
- Encourage organisations to think creatively as to how engagement and participation can be achieved and incorporated into their existing activities.
- Examine how engagement and participation of marginalised and hard to reach groups is currently undertaken and what can be done to promote the participation of these groups.
- Look at different ways by which information can be circulated to the community.
- Build on existing good practice that currently operates within Doncaster.