

# Summary Report

## Doncaster LINK 6 Month Engagement and Activities Plan

**“The Future of the NHS in Doncaster.”**

**September 2010 – March 2011.**



13<sup>th</sup>/ 14<sup>th</sup> September.

This report is based on the findings of a facilitated session of activities undertaken by LINK volunteers and members on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010. A variety of exercises encouraging feedback and discussion amongst attendees contributed to the collective recommendations made on the final pages of the report.

### Objectives of 2 day session

The objectives of the 2 day session were as follows;

- Produce a 6 month plan of action with regards to engagement activities.
- Agree collectively and make recommendations with regards to the ideas put forward, the resources available to us as well as how effective these activities will be for our audience. (Recommendations can be found in summary findings at the back of the document.)
- Gain an understanding of new audiences and the things that might attract them.

### Considerations

A list of considerations were also put forward for participants to hold at the back of their minds with regards to the 2 day sessions which included;

- The importance of the current climate and the impact of change on the LINK.  
  
It was important to gauge whether this was a positive or a negative, opportunity or a threat. The impending changes and mention of Healthwatch were raised as well as the proposed changes being fundamental to the general public's interests and concerns.
- Empowering the community and building capacity through training.
- Time of year for engagement activities.
- Budget the LINK has available is not limitless. How do we balance trying something new with being prudent?
- What we know already about our baseline position from the activities and membership database information?
- Who has access to the communities we want to engage with already? We coined the term "Piggybacking" as part of our sessions.
- Being realistic with what can be achieved based on the host's capacity.
- Why should people want to be engaged? What Is In It For Me?

## Overview of current position

Prior to the facilitated session taking place Icon Events worked with the host in gathering information about current activities and membership data. This included the following activities;

- Sending out a questionnaire to all members gauging feedback and collecting opinion
- Analysing successful activities
- Analysing the existing database of membership
- Establishing a general understanding of the LINK
- Review of the community engagement strategy developed by the LINK

The questionnaire which was sent to membership earlier on in the month formed a relevant insight into activities developed by the LINK. Eight questionnaires were returned to the LINK host for consideration. Some of the comments made were extracted prior to the session and fed back to the group as part of the overview of the current position. The comments made by members are listed below;

- "It is a one stop health and social care shop."
- "Has the LINK met your expectations so far? No. Why? By not challenging on big issues which would rouse the public and get LINK noticed."
- "It gives a person the chance to change the NHS"
- "Meetings are not in convenient places or at times people can easily attend."
- "Many people give up after one attempt at making change – poor stick-ability."

From our pre session activities the following was deduced;

Current membership – profile/ age/ ethnicity

- Approx 200 members currently
- Over 40 years old predominant / retirement age. Not sure exact age demographic
- Largely white British

Current engagement activities? What are they?

- Coffee mornings
- One off events
- "Piggy back" events with other partners
- Road show
- Training sessions for members
- Consultation groups with core themes
- Web site
- Leaflets and marketing / promotional materials via the LINK brand
- Reports produced for the benefit of the public
- Word of mouth

When do they happen?

- Once a month
- One off occasions
- When they are needed
- On line that people can access

How effective are they? Are they relevant enough?

- Activities generally hit and miss
- Coffee mornings sometimes effective
- One off events in partnership with other partners eg, the large event at the Dome TARA event have been effective for recruitment of new members
- Consultation groups
- Strategic networking with partners effective
- Yet to see the effect of Road shows in October
- No set structures for majority of activities as they are driven by membership coming forward
- People don't know that they exist / are the times these activities are held appropriate?
- Ongoing engagement of membership difficult? The same faces involved.

### The "gaps" in the target audience

Icon Events used the LINK community engagement strategy as a guide in producing a list of specific audiences. As part of the session the group undertook an exercise to help understand how much was known about each of the themed audiences. The items are listed in no particular order or subject.

- Voluntary and Community Organisations and their service users  
CVS and their database of groups as well as the representation they have held on the Exec.  
Age Concern / Age UK  
Groups that fundraise across Doncaster  
The different and varied Trusts across Doncaster – Doncaster West Development Trust / New Deal for Communities or Doncaster Central Development Trust / North Doncaster Development Trust etc.  
TARAs (Tenants and Residents Associations)  
Faith based groups
- Older people and their representatives  
Older People's Parliament  
University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age

Women's Institute

○ Disabled groups and individuals

SYCIL

Disability Awareness Day

Stroke Club

Coffee Mornings

Autism +

DMBC Together Information based on 0-19

Carers – Doncaster Partnership for Carers

Deaf School

○ Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Community

Doncaster Neighbourhood and Community Outreach Officers

CVS Equalities workers

Women's Centre

Community Carers Development team

○ The housebound

Meals on Wheels

Social Care Team

People delivering prescriptions

Homestart

Care Quality Commission

CPN Community Psychiatric Nurses

Macmillan Nurses

Central Control at DMBC that interact with this audience

○ Hard to Reach

DAS (Doncaster Alcohol Services)

Drug Depot Mexborough

Success Doncaster – Working Neighbourhood Fund initiative / LEGI programmes.

Over 18 different partners working on Success Doncaster funded programmes

Faith based organisations

Opportunity Centres – run by Maggie Cant

A4e

CVS

- Patient's / Service users of Health and Social Care Services
  - R-dash – regional group for mental health services
  - Re:Think
  - Re:bound
  - NHS Doncaster Patient Experience and Learning group
  - Health based Charities

Within the recommendations it has been suggested that more mapping is done with regards to drilling down and building the database of partner contacts within each of these organisations. Admittedly due to time constraints it was not possible to continue this exercise in great detail.

### **Engaging new audiences to get involved with the LINK**

Engagement activities needed to focus on a blend of old and new. There are activities that work well already within the LINK family but may need slightly improving or developing, and there are activities that may need to be introduced to the LINK to galvanise new attendees.

#### **Existing membership**

“A crowd is a tribe without a leader.

A crowd is a tribe without communication.

Most organizations spend their time marketing to the crowd. Smart organizations assemble the tribe.”

Seth Godin. Tribes. We need you to Lead us..

The group were challenged as to whether the LINK was a crowd or a tribe of people?

It was decided that in the majority the LINK was a crowd with a small tribe of people leading it. The small tribe were identified as the volunteers that are deeply committed to the LINK and have developed a core “family” of regular contributors.

The focus of the session therefore turned towards developing the “tribal” mentality of the LINK by encouraging the existing members to become more involved and engaged in activities. Getting members who are currently inactive re-engaged is a core part of developing the LINK’s success.

#### **New Members**

In encouraging existing members engage more with the LINK there is more likely to be a growth spurt. The likelihood, however of putting forward new ideas for engagement is critical at this stage.

Below is a list of activities and actions discussed and put forward by the group;

**The Future of the NHS? Public Debate**  
**Our overarching theme for activities in**  
**the next 6 months**

<b>Training activities that focus on linking the LINK themes to specific audiences. The LINK could develop training activities that people can attend</b>	<b>Existing Activities</b>	<b>Communications</b>	<b>Partners</b>
How to make the most of engaging your community regarding health issues? - a training programme for TARAs.	Focus on improving the Coffee Mornings – adding a theme and keynote speaker as well as using them to signpost people to... The LINK Roadshows!	Develop the “agony aunt” “ask and expert” function through existing communications channels – website / SINE FM/	Develop linkages to strategic partners in a more focused manner through the creation of partnership events and activities.
How to make the most of Health Charity volunteering”	“Sneezers” are rewarded and incentivised. Reward the people that refer the LINK to people.	Develop one off leaflets and flyers for your road shows. No need to rebrand.	Find captive audiences and either “piggy back” on them, or create new focused activities.
Focus on social enterprises based on health.	Public debate as noted above	Publish the findings of anything you develop – information generated from members / reports / events/ conversations etc.	

Clarity needed as to what the LINK can offer its members. As there is now a suggested overarching theme the LINK assumes the position of a portal of information for people to find out about issues affecting them.

## Resources Available

Before a conclusion is drawn from the above list of new activities discussions were held with regards to the resources available to the LINK. This is a vital consideration when deciding on the activities that will take the LINK forward.

Resource	Position
Volunteers	Find new volunteers to join the ICE group. Current volunteers stretched to capacity. Still important to ensure current volunteers included.
Links to other partners	Exec connections not working hard enough with regards to who they know. Could be more than currently exist. Some partners not too sure what the LINK is and what it does.
Budget	£9100 + Vat in total for activities over the next 6 months. Potential for match funding from other partners interested in the same target audience? VAT increase in January
LINK Executive	How does the exec currently interact and move LINK issues and agenda items forward within their own organisations?
Host team	Donna Full time Richard part time community engagement Jan part time administration
Merchandise	Enough in stock to last till March 2011
Newsletter	A4 Laminated and sent out to members Also emailed to people
Meeting facilities across Doncaster	Arranged internally by the LINK Donated in kind by other organisations Reduced price venue spaces
Sponsorship	Railway station Sine FM Most Wanted On the buses Robin Hood Airport..etc..

Target Audience	Voluntary and Community Organisations	Older People and their representatives	Disabled groups and individuals	BME Community	Housebound	Hard to Reach	Patient Service Users of Health and Social Care
Activity	<b>Public Debate our focus for 2011. All activity geared toward the subject of Change in the NHS...</b>						
	<b>Themed coffee morning activities on a monthly basis with keynote speaker involved</b>						
Activity applying to all groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public debate</b> about the health service issue and upcoming Conservative proposals. “Are you concerned with what will happen? Is it going to work? Etc” Link is host that brings people together for a general debate. Invite a panel of experts – local GP, politician, care user etc on the panel.</li> <li>• “Ask an expert” Got a question we will find an expert to answer it for you. A panel of “agony aunts.”</li> <li>• Connect strategically to experts across Doncaster. Role for the host. Create robust database. Facilitate a networking session amongst partners working in the field with a target audience. after hours hosted by individual from LINK mgt committee. This is qualified by personal connections beforehand. Partner themes to include; Disability / Hard to Reach / Housebound – the format would be to / Business; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a)sign up all partners to the database that live in Doncaster themselves and want to stay up to date with the latest</li> <li>b)Consult with them about the issues that their client group faces</li> <li>c)Create useful information to circulate to their databases of clients as well as find out about how to engage with their audiences</li> </ul> Hosted by host and chair of LINK it will bring together a small network of people that share your target audience. These partners will want to know how the LINK can help their clients. Informal networking will support this. </li> <li>• Town centre road shows</li> <li>• Blend and mix of activities that are partnership focused / neighbourhood specific</li> <li>• Build upon existing coffee morning format – expand to include a wider range of people / promote better / change times? / locations to fit the very heart of the community.</li> </ul>						
Partners working with these groups already	The LINK “Bible.” Development of partners and mapping of who exists where with focus on sector specific themes.						
When	CVS relationship room for improvement.	October	November	Built into each activity	January	Partner working	Build into each activity Existing activities

<b>Where?</b>	<p>Themed events to consider appropriate venues.</p> <p>Information stands – opportunity centres. Bus Interchange.</p> <p>Piggy back in each neighbourhood</p>	Themed coffee morning activities will need to be planned and confirmed.					
<b>How long?</b>	TBC						
<b>Cost associated?</b>	To be developed with the LINK host						
<b>Who will deliver</b> <b>Internal or external</b>	<p>LINK host</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>External support</p>						

## The Engagement Matrix

The template framework for the engagement matrix included above includes additions of activities developed and scoped during the facilitated session.

It is suggested that the host spend some time developing the finer details of the engagement activity details within this document and using it as a master document for staying in touch with the Executive as well as ICE group.

Accompanying the engagement matrix is the 6 month calendar of activities completed during the facilitated session.

## Recommendations based on facilitated session findings;

### 1. Who's Who

The exercises that were conducted as part of the session evidenced and lead to the conclusion that;

- The immediate LINK activists are unaware of what they know or who they know. Information about who is involved with other organisations other than the LINK was an interesting revelation.
- Representation of other organisations at LINK activities must be explored further and challenged to create better linkages.

### 2. Expand the ICE group

The ICE group should look to recruit a few more members with core skill sets to focus on supporting the host develop the next 6 months of activities based on this report. They will be a focused working group. It is recommended that focusing on specific tasks will make recruitment of volunteers slightly easier;

- Administration
- Graphic Design expertise – suggest contacting the college to recommend a student who might like some experience in developing some marketing materials as part of course work etc.
- Event delivery interest. People who might like to experience attending and planning event activities
- Communicator with the membership! Find innovative ways of developing communication channels with regards to activities and building engagement techniques – website / blog / facebook / etc

It is recommended that this group is put together asap in order to support the host develop activities. This group will perhaps need training and support to understand how they will be

able to develop and deliver some of these activities as well as how to set up an engagement action plan.

### **3. Gaps in knowledge about target audiences**

The partners list quoted in this report is only the starting point and can be expanded and developed much further. The LINK need to create leverage quickly in order to engage with as many audiences as possible. It is recommended that working direct with organisations that have access to these audiences is key in the next 6 months. The actions falling out of the activity include;

- Host role to meet strategic partners and facilitate informal partner networking events
- Challenge the organisations already involved through representation on the LINK eg, at an Exec level to work harder.
- The development of a “Bible” of contacts that is continually added to and refreshed with contact detail information is imperative as the knowledge on other partners and services across Doncaster with regards to target groups is currently very weak.

### **4. Have an overarching theme to the next 6 months. The Future of the NHS in Doncaster.**

Most people in Doncaster are concerned with the current state of affairs with regards to health services in general. Feedback from the host team has also indicated that there has been a sharp rise in enquiries relating to the future of the NHS. It is recommended, therefore, that the next 6 months focus on a core theme as their activity with a crescendo event in February in the form of a public debate.

### **5. Based on available resources be realistic with activities that are likely to be achieved.**

After considerable discussion with regards to resource allocation it is suggested that the LINK network focus on their strengths as a means of building the network and developing activities. This will include prioritisation of core theme activities as mentioned earlier in the document. For example, hard to reach audiences require a lot of engagement resources, whereas natural linkages to themes such as disability are easier to manage. Developing the linkages to partners also enable access to a core audience. It is recommended that the LINK make further detailed additions to the engagement matrix included within this report.

### **6. Focus on core engagement activities within a monthly cycle.**

Adopting a cyclical approach to engagement activities on a monthly basis will enable the LINK to develop a pattern to monthly activity. This pattern of activity will include;

- Focusing on a core theme every month
- Developing linkages with strategic partners and inviting them to attend sessions created to understand the core issues they face as well as encourage them to communicate with their databases about the LINK
- Development of a coffee morning at the end of the month linked to the specific theme with a focus on attracting a relevant public speaker
- Use the SINE FM “ask and expert” slot to promote the monthly theme
- Ensure that BME issues are built into activities

By focusing on a core theme you will be able to develop a framework within which to work which will become easier to manage.

## **7. Strengthening the available communications**

Making simple additions to the website such as;

- A LINK blog
- A calendar of events for health based activities taking place across the whole of Doncaster. As relationships are built with partners encouraging them to forward details of events and activities taking place will create added value for the LINK members.

## **Conclusion**

The two day facilitated session took into account the political atmosphere, the LINK resources – both as host, volunteer, and budget limitations, as well as the time frame left between now and March 2011. It also assessed what has been achieved to date, how the LINK may progress in improving its existing suite of activities as well as some new ideas for moving activity forward.

The overriding message is that it will not be possible to do everything we would like to do; therefore, making a decision about focusing on a specific plan of action in the next 6 months has been the basis of the recommendations made in this summary report.

The underpinning basis of this activity is the focus on the changes impacting Doncaster health services as well as ensuring that the LINK is a portal for useful information during the next 6 months whilst changes are implemented.

We hope that the LINK exec will accept the recommendations put forward as a result!

**For further information with regards to this summary report please contact**  
[Emily@iconevents.co.uk](mailto:Emily@iconevents.co.uk) or call 07957470189.