



# **Manchester LINKs Communication & Engagement Strategy**

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# 1.0 Introduction.

The purpose of this document is to outline the Communication & Engagement Strategy for the 'Manchester LINK' (Local Involvement Network) across the city. Local Involvement Networks will provide ways for larger numbers of people to engage with their local health providers and social care organisations. They will help to shape new and existing services commissioned and provided in ways that best suit the local communities and the people in them.

## 1.1 Intended Audience of Plan

- LINK Steering Group
- NHS Trusts within the boundaries of Manchester City Centre
- Manchester Health Social Care Organisations
- Residents of Manchester
- Partner organisations
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

## 1.2 Manchester LINKs Mission Statement

“The Manchester LINK is the umbrella organisation which brings together other networks, organisations and individuals in Manchester to enable them to have a voice in improving health and social care services.

We will do this by working in a collaborative and inclusive way across Manchester taking account of the rich diversity of the people of Manchester and their needs”

## 1.3 Purpose of LINK

**The Manchester LINK is a network of local people, organisations and groups that want to make health and social care services better.**

Manchester LINK will give everyone in the community, from individuals to voluntary groups, the chance to say what they think about local health and social care services and experiences. The LINK is a way of telling the people who purchase, provide and manage local services what is and isn't working, as well as suggesting ideas which could improve services.

The LINK will:

- Provide flexible ways for local people to be involved
- Support and strengthen what already exists within the communities
- Build relationships with statutory organisations that commission and provide services

## **1.4 What will the Link do?**

LINKs will have the flexibility to work within the changing landscape of the NHS and social care systems and to fit in with their local circumstances. They will:

- Give everyone the chance to say what they think about their local health and social care services, what is working well and what is not so good.
- Engage with the wider community of Manchester on a much larger scale
- Give everyone the chance to check how health and social care services are planned and run
- Feed back what has been said about services, so that things can be changed for the better

### **The information they gather will help:**

- Commissioners make informed decisions about what people in the area need and assist them in their role as contract managers;
- Providers who need ongoing feedback to know what it is like to be a recipient of the services they have delivered; managers to know whether commissioners are purchasing services that meet the needs of local people and whether providers are meeting those needs;
- OSC's base their reviews on actual feedback (the LINK has two representatives who can inform the OSC, and members of the LINK may be able to participate in OSC activity);
- The regulators access local information on the publics' and users' needs and experiences; and
- Local strategic partnerships, which work to draw together priorities and initiatives within local area agreements.

## 2.0 Objectives

### 2.1 Aims and Objectives:

Overall aims:

- Create awareness and understanding, and raise the profile of LINKs locally and communicate the relevant information to each stakeholder group.
- Seek to promote and ensure action is taken to promote pieces of work and publicise results.
- Gain commitment to the Manchester LINK from key stakeholders involved in its use.
- Ensure LINKs messages are included in the appropriate Council (and partner organisations') communications channels.
- Ensure a two way channel of communication between the LINK and those interested.
- Manage expectations of the timing, scale and impact of the implementation of LINKs.

Immediate objectives:

- Determine how the LINK will promote the involvement of people in the commissioning and provision of health and social care services in the city of Manchester.
- Feed back to stakeholders about the work being done.
- Engage with a range of stakeholders to provide information about LINKs and listen to views/concerns, and consider possible work streams surrounding these issues.
- Map the area; review the work that is being carried out locally.
- Develop a protocol for working with other LINKs/ health and social care organisations.
- Identify issues to be taken up by the LINK.
- Ensure ongoing engagement with individuals and groups in Manchester.
- Develop a protocol for working with a "regulatory" body in the development and working of a LINK.

### 2.2 Core Messages

Core messages are the concepts that we want our stakeholders to remember. These messages will be woven through all of the communications materials produced as well as any press releases. The message will be adapted (i.e. in complexity, terminology) according to the stakeholders' knowledge and needs.

The following criteria will be used to measure any message in any piece of communication:

- **Relevance:** Is the message appropriate and clear in purpose?
- **Clarity:** Is the message written in a coherent manner, in understandable language (i.e. no jargon) and easily understood?

- Credibility: Is the message believable and trustworthy?
- Response: What is the intended impact of the message?

The key points of information to communicate are:

- The Governments commitment to giving the public a greater say in developing and delivering health and social care related services (i.e. the reason for the introduction of LINKs)
- The benefits of LINKs
- The scope of LINKs information
- How people can get involved in the LINK and what they can expect to gain from it

### **2.3 Stakeholders**

In order to make sure the project implementation happens successfully, different people or 'stakeholders' need to be communicated with. Understanding these stakeholders will help to target messages, channel communication and resources more effectively.

It needs to be established what each stakeholder group knows about LINKs at present, what their future information needs are and what channels of communication and tone of message will be most effective for them.

Core stakeholder groups include:

- LINK members
- Local residents
- Local community groups
- Voluntary sector organisations
- Adult Social Care
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)
- NHS Manchester
- Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust
- Central Manchester and Manchester Children's NHS Trust
- University Hospitals of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust
- Christie NHS Foundation Trust
- North West Ambulance NHS Trust
- Pennine Acute Trust (North Manchester General Hospital)
- Greater Manchester Northwest
- Other LINKs

This list is not exhaustive but gives an indication of our key stakeholders

## **3.0 How We Will Do This**

### **3.1 Communicating with Others**

The LINKs aim is to develop an ongoing dialogue that brings together everyone with an interest in health and social care so the communication methods and tools will need to be relevant to each stakeholder group. (A channel that works for one stakeholder may not work for another; for example; emails maybe cost effective but not everyone can access emails). It was agreed that to communicate effectively with the number of organisations in Manchester that it would be good practice to detail the procedures to be followed:

- The Steering Group will meet with a Liaison group from the Local Authority and NHS organisations to discuss forthcoming work planning on a 6monthly basis.
- The Steering Group or Working Group will meet with the relevant Local Authority or NHS organisation or private providers to discuss the outcome of any piece of work.
- People representing the LINK in a formal capacity to external organisations are to be appointed by the Steering Group and these individuals will report back to the Steering Group
- The LINK does not believe that it is an effective use of its resources to put LINK members on all committees and Boards as requested by statutory organisations but will use its resources to help support these organisations to identify local people in the community to represent the lay interest
- All LINK related enquiries will have to go through the LINK Support Organisation to Steering Group or Chair
- Only the Chair and Vice Chair and Chairs of the working groups may speak on behalf of the LINK to outside agencies. In the absence of the Chair or Vice chair the LINK Support Organisation will endeavour to identify an appropriate member of the Steering Group
- Anyone who speaks to the press or other outside agency on behalf of the LINK may
  1. only speak on relevant issues agreed by the Steering Group and
  2. when it is agreed that this person speaks to the agency concerned (for example where special knowledge or expertise is required)

### **3.2 Existing Channels**

There are a number of existing channels to communicate messages including contact lists, email groups, local networks – these should be identified and fully exploited in communicating from the LINK as it involves the same stakeholder groups.

Currently we have information disseminated through;

- Manchester LINK newsletter
- Voluntary organisations newsletters
- Trust's e-bulletins, newsletters and websites
- MACC website
- Transitional board and working group meetings
- Hyperlinks on other organisations' websites
- Manchester City Council Website – My Manchester Services

- CoMMUni Website (Manchester Metropolitan University)
- Media contacts

### **3.3 Face-to-face**

This method, despite having a small reach, is best for ensuring clear understanding. The complexities of LINK can be more easily explained, and issues and concerns addressed immediately.

Despite being the most effective, this method should be used wisely as it is expensive and labour intensive.

### **3.4 Media**

Any releases to local media, specifically about the Manchester LINK, should be coordinated via the LINK Support Office, and a log of how many are featured editorially should be kept. All releases should be signed off by a designated officer working on the project to ensure all content and any quotes are accurate and follow the correct protocols.

### **3.5 Printed Materials**

A range of printed materials will be used throughout the project, including letterhead, posters, leaflets etc, and a commitment made to produce these in accessible formats. These will be disseminated to Hospitals, GP surgeries, clinics, libraries, community centres, fitness centres etc.

The shelf life of any printed literature will be considered when deciding how many copies to print. As the LINK project is still in development some messages are subject to change.

### **3.6 Digital**

This is an important means of communication as it is relatively inexpensive, easily updateable, and can reach a large audience.

Websites, intranets and emails will all be used, but they all rely on good management and upkeep to avoid misinformation or out-of-date information remaining in the public domain.

## 4.0 Issues & Risks

The purpose of identifying issues and risks is to plan in advance how these may be managed to ensure the project is a success.

The following table represents the key challenges and external influences that may affect the community engagement strategy, and what actions are recommended to overcome these if necessary:

Issue	Risk	Mitigating Actions
Competition for stakeholder attention	Stakeholders receive conflicting messages from the number of new initiatives being established in Services across Manchester	<p>Build relationships with key communications contacts within Manchester and partner organisations</p> <p>Avoid duplication of information by ensuring that key messages are embedded within materials used by others</p> <p><i>Identify related initiatives in Manchester and ensure it is presented in context</i></p>
Misunderstanding by 'non-practitioner' stakeholders	Overcomplicated / too much 'jargon' is used in communications	<p>All text is written in plain English, following recommendations from national project</p> <p>All materials are checked to ensure they are 'reader friendly'</p>
Difficulty engaging middle managers	Messages get lost, managers do not view as a priority and do not promote to their staff	<p>Identify channels to reach middle managers; group by sector</p> <p>Discuss LINK in the context of other related services</p> <p>Ensure individuals understand relevance</p> <p>Ensure ties in with management performance targets</p>
Difficulty in reaching 'hard to reach' groups	Messages get lost, misunderstanding of what the LINK is; not sufficiently engaged in helping develop services	<p>Identify channels to reach individuals belonging to the groups</p> <p>Undertake training to ensure understanding of the groups you are seeking to engage with</p> <p>Understand their issues</p> <p>Discussions around related issues</p> <p>Ensure it ties in with their agenda.</p> <p>Improve accessibility.</p> <p>Identify 'gatekeepers' to communities / groups and use these</p>

## 5.0 Measurement & Evaluation

The communications plan for LINK will need ongoing review and development. The impact of communications activity needs to be evaluated at regular intervals to help identify what is working (and not working) and to refine the strategy and reallocate resources where necessary.

The success of a particular method will be measured against the reach of the channel, whether the message was understood, or where stakeholders are on the commitment curve.

*All measurements will be linked to objectives met, but will include:*

Consider whether any of the following methods might be relevant:

- Effectiveness of mail shots (how many were undelivered)
- Returned reply slips (where appropriate)
- Monitoring the number of press cuttings – article placement (positive or negative).
- Recording the number of enquiries about the LINK
- Evaluating attendance of events – e.g. number of attendees but also asking for feedback on usefulness/understanding of the event
- Hits on the website (mechanisms in place for this)
- Questionnaire results
- Focus group findings (with appropriate groups of participants)
- Issues raised by members of the public
- Numbers of people registered with the LINK

## Appendix 1

What is Community Engagement?

(Taken from the Manchester Alliance for Community Care (MACC) website)

Manchester has an official strategy on how to involve local people in shaping the services in their area. This is essentially what the **Manchester Community Engagement Strategy** sets out. One of the most significant things about it is the level of support it's getting: it has been accepted by the local NHS, the City Council, the voluntary and community sector and other partners.

The Strategy breaks community engagement into six main types of activity. These are all things which any organisation can contribute to in some way.

- **Informing**
- **Researching**
- **Involving**
- **Consulting**
- **Devolving Decisions**
- **Supporting Community Action**

One of the main aims of the strategy is to work together to tackle social exclusion and enable people to have a say in decisions which affect their lives. This is one of the key principles on which MACC was founded during the 1980s so we're keen to promote the Strategy as a means of helping achieve this goal.

In practical terms the work is focusing on four areas at present:

- **Better Governance** - supporting people in getting involved with local planning and decision making.
- **Better voluntary and community sector service delivery** - building on all the good practice which already exists.
- **Better Social Infrastructure** - ensuring local people are able to make a contribution to their local community if they want to.
- **Better Social Capital and Cohesion** - promoting the idea of communities and neighbourhoods.