

## **LINK Herefordshire – summary of work done to date – September 2008**

The LINK contract was awarded to Carers Federation Ltd. in April 2008.

### **Immediately**

A press release announcing this was issued to local media on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The new host organisation was also publicised in the Council publication (Herefordshire Matters) which is sent to 80,000 households in Herefordshire quarterly, and in council employees' monthly newsletter (First Press), and in elected members' publication Services Update.

A letter was sent to all Councillors, Board members of the PCT, Hospital Trust and WM Ambulance Service, informing them of Herefordshire's Local Involvement Network (LINK), host appointment and LINK Operations Manager, Kath Soanes contact details on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

### **Recruitment**

The Herefordshire team leader started work on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2008.

Interviews were held in late June for the part-time community engagement worker and the position offered. The successful applicant is offered as a fulltime secondment from Hereford council and arrangements to enable this secondment are nearly complete

### **Office accommodation**

While the initial arrangement fell through a 0844 number has been established and promoted for the public to call locally. The LINK Herefordshire office was established during mid August.

### **Promotion**

LINK participant packs were sent to a database of local stakeholders, voluntary groups and ex PPI Forum members that had given their details to Herefordshire Council June 2008. This informed people of the role of LINK, the details of the host agency and began capturing local people's concerns.

The main database was derived from participants at a Herefordshire LINK stakeholder event which had been held in December 07 to determine what people wanted of a LINK and what they felt a host should offer to make it effective.

Prior to April 08, council officers had given many presentations and attended many meetings to brief and discuss the forthcoming LINK with PPIFs, local authority directorates, scrutiny committees, health bodies, non-government organisations and service-user led groups.

Since the abolition of PPIFs, Ex-PPIF members and other interested parties have been sent information about important health and social care issues happening at present (notably a strategic review of provider services, and plans to set up a GP-led 'polyclinic') in case they wish, in the transitional period, to pursue these through other avenues such as health scrutiny.

The health scrutiny committee has received regular updates on LINK progress.

The team leader has attended:

- LINK presentations to inform the public
- Hereford Council and PCT Involving People Strategy meetings – 5/06, 16/06, 10/07, 15/07, 25/07 various sub group meetings to decide public involvement events plan, press release, advertising and marketing communications plan.
- Network/visibility opportunities – including People’s Union, Herefordshire Centre of Independent Living AGM, Mental Health Workshop to Develop the West Midlands Specialised Commissioning Patient and Public Engagement Strategy, Adult Social Care scrutiny committee meeting.

### **Directly engaging the Public and Health & Social Care organisations working locally**

Working collaboratively, but independently with the Council and PCT from a shared platform with costs shared.

- Throughout August, 16 public involvement/engagement events were delivered at eight venues across the county, to inform the public of Herefordshire LINK and seek nominations to the steering group. Invitations had been sent to organisations and individuals and advertising placed in local media.
- Interviews have been given and press coverage or editorial should result.
- Leaflets explaining the purpose of LINK, how to get involved and how to raise issues, with the host contact details had been included with The Journal newspaper and distributed to 50,000 homes. An updated version of this leaflet will additionally be included in the September publication of Herefordshire Matters and distributed to the other 30,000 homes across the County.

These events were also used to engage members, participants and volunteers, and to further extend our knowledge of local organisational networks. The events also helped inform the Herefordshire Council & PCT joint ‘involving people strategy’, and determine the community preferred communication process over local health and social care issues. This intelligence will help to inform the LINK work plan

### **Election of the Steering Group**

Through these public meetings we established nominees for the LINK steering group and asked for a guide as to what is wanted of the LINK.

A meeting of nominees was held on September 11<sup>th</sup> that decided the LINK steering group and the first full meeting is planned for mid October 2008.

### **NEXT**

We will continue to work to support the steering group by offering suggestions on Governance and Protocols including:

- Complaints policy
- Procedure for dealing with conflicts of interest
- Agreement of roles and responsibilities
- LINK terms of reference
- Protocols with relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Protocols with Health Trusts and Social Care Services to ensure good communication and procedures for visits
- Protocols for communication and work with other relevant LINKs
- Training policy and plan in place for LINKs members
- Expenses policy

Also to support LINK Herefordshire to agree structure and appropriate groups (e.g. steering group, task groups) formed (*e.g. evidence of membership of group, meeting minutes*) and to agree work plan

Also to work across LINKs boundaries – engaging in meetings, events, consultations and studies to better inform LINK Herefordshire of developing process and best practice.

Mike Vials LINK Herefordshire Team Leader August 5<sup>th</sup> 2008.