



Feedback and questions from County Durham LINK's Annual General Meeting

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Feedback and questions from County Durham LINK's Annual General Meeting

Introduction

County Durham LINK held its third Annual General meeting (AGM) on Tuesday 4th October 2011 at The Durham Centre, Belmont Industrial Estate, Durham.

At every one of our AGM's we have always asked those present to provide us with feedback so that we can improve the standard of our events. Based on the feedback received at past events we have made several changes to the way we run the event.

These include:

- supplying maps to the venue
- doing away with seating plans

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to:-

- summarise the feedback received from people who attended County Durham LINK's AGM
- deal with people's concerns and issues regarding the event
- to enable those involved in organising the event to learn from the participants experience of the event
- answer any questions that people were not able to raise at the meeting

Feedback from attendees

1. Venue

The overall feedback on the venue was very positive. People thought it was a very good venue and that the catering was equally as good.

- “Very good and the food was delicious”
- “Warm and welcoming”
- “Lovely”

A very small number of people stated that they felt cold due to the air conditioning being on; this is something to bear in mind for the future.

Those people that interacted with the venue staff had nothing but praise for them.

From the Host perspective they were extremely helpful throughout the booking and on the day. The parking situation was well handled, 14 people turned up wanting disabled parking despite only 4 members confirming that it was required at the time of booking.

Most felt that the venue was easy to get to. However a couple of people did raise concerns about how easy it would be to get to via public transport. A bus route runs between Durham town centre and Broomside Lane, from there it would be a short walk to the Durham Centre. However for those who requested transport County Durham LINK did arrange, book and pay for this. The option to request transport was given on the event booking form.

In addition to offering transport County Durham LINK sent all attendees and taxis firms booked for the day by the LINK, a map and directions of how to get to venue, this was in response to feedback received from last year’s AGM about the venue being difficult to find.

2. Event

The majority of attendees gave positive feedback about the event. With people stating it was well organised, well attended, provided a good debate, informative and interesting, inclusive, worthwhile, focussed and relevant, and some specific comments were:

- “Good use of the technology audio and visual”
- “Many thanks to all County Durham LINK’s staff for preparing and delivering the AGM and thanks to Liz Greer and Mary Simpson for their contributions – I’m much more informed and so, I will be involved more effectively now”
- “A good debate”
- “Very good for consulting members and other agencies”
- “Thought provoking – shame about the voting bit, didn’t spoil the feel that this was a well planned and well produced event and a lot of work had gone into it”
- “Overall highly informative and highly participative. I wish the electronic voting had worked properly (I bet it did in rehearsal) as it was an excellent idea”

In response to the last two comments and the numerous others about the voting system, checks were carried out on the morning when it was set up and everything was working fine. Unfortunately, it did not work when it was required. Many attendees felt that the electronic voting system was unnecessary and if we had followed the suggestion made below, this would have meant that the event would not have over run.

- “Would have been better to take an early break when it started to go wrong and decide upon an alternative way forward”

As this was the main issue for most of our attendees, we apologise to everyone who were inconvenienced.

We understand that many people did not like or found some of the questions ambiguous and have forwarded this comment to the Consultant who delivered this presentation.

A few people commented on the scheduling of the event

- “Mary Simpson should have been scheduled earlier”

Unfortunately there was no control over this, as the timing of Mary’s presentation was dictated by her schedule, and Mary was unable to attend the event any earlier. We are grateful to her though for giving up her time to come and talk to the LINK membership.

One person thought the day would have benefited by input from Durham County Council.

- “A lot of time understandably spent on the transition to HealthWatch which could have benefitted from input/information from Durham County Council especially given the question on the commissioning of HealthWatch”

Members of Durham County Council Commissioning team were invited to come along to our AGM as guest speakers to give their view on how Local HealthWatch will be commissioned, however no one was available to attend.

Questions raised after the event

1. For the Guest speaker

These questions were forwarded to Mary Simpson for a response.

1.1 How will the HealthWatch pathfinders help given the fact that they have just begun and the commissioning process for other HealthWatch's will begin before they report?

The Pathfinders will not be reporting all in one go at the end of the Pathfinder programme. Learning, information and products will be available to share along the way. We are planning events for all Pathfinders to come together and further information can be shared depending on the outcomes of those events. We are also looking at how we can make appropriate use of other existing networks in particular the Health and Wellbeing Board early implementer learning network.

1.2 How will the HealthWatch advisory and task and finish help given the fact that they have just begun and the commissioning process for other HealthWatch's will begin before they report?

The HealthWatch Advisory Group and Task and Finish Groups have been operating for some time and products are already being made available. Some of their work feeds into the development and design of HealthWatch, some is more tangible (e.g. the guide to HealthWatch England, the HealthWatch online forum, the information on an approach to developing local HealthWatch in Kent). As we move out of the design phase and into the implementation phase (of the HealthWatch programme) we expect there will be more products to share. Do keep an eye on the Department of Health Modernisation Channel's HealthWatch pages and you could join the HealthWatch online forum if you

haven't already done so as a good way to keep in touch with latest developments.

The link to the modernisation channel is:

<http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/category/care/healthwatch-2/>.

You can join the online forum by registering at

HealthWatch@nunwood.com.

1.3 Where do volunteers fit into the Healthwatch concept?

The HealthWatch concept is for a local, community- based consumer champion involving people in the area in carrying out its roles, and providing everyone with an opportunity to get involved to the extent that they wish. We do not have any plans to change the model that any individual, group or organisation can join a local HealthWatch, just as any individual, group or organisation can join a LINK, and that volunteers will continue to have contributions to make to local HealthWatch.

1.4 One HealthWatch member on the Health and wellbeing board is insufficient for influencing decision making.

1.5 If Health and wellbeing boards are chaired by head of adult services and funded by local authority. How can you ensure one voice reflects the communities and individuals that HealthWatch will support?

I think these 2 questions (1.4 & 1.5) are linked. Although the Health and Social Care Bill sets out the minimum membership which, as you rightly point out, includes a representative of the local HealthWatch organisation, local authorities and the health and wellbeing board will be able to invite other groups and stakeholders with particular skills and expertise. Membership should be determined locally to reflect local needs and priorities.

The purpose of the health and wellbeing policy isn't just about setting up the committee, but about stimulating effective joint

working for and with local people and communities. Membership is not the only way to engage with the work of health and wellbeing boards. Health and wellbeing boards will need to engage with a variety of players and stakeholders to ensure the right expertise, including those of less well-heard groups, are inputted into the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and joint health and wellbeing strategies.

Health and wellbeing boards will be under a new duty to involve the local public which will include patients and service users when developing their JSNA and joint health and wellbeing strategy. We are not specifying how health and wellbeing boards should discharge this duty as we think it is important to give local boards the flexibility to decide how best to engage and work with the people in their community.

2. For the Management Committee

2.1 Need to continue to include more of County Durham's population, especially young people and minority groups.

County Durham LINK has completed several pieces of work with children and young people by working in partnership with other organisations like 2D.

“LINK has had good partnership working to ensure the engagement of children and young people. It is essential to ensure that this continues with the new HealthWatch.” Robert Fothergill, Participation Worker for Children, Young People & Families, 2D.

A member of the Host staff has attended several Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender events and a member of LGBT over 50's group has expressed an interest in representing this community on our Management Committee.

We have attended several traveller group meetings and continued a dialogue with the Travellers Liaison Service, to raise awareness of County Durham LINK.

We have also attended Learning Disability Parliament meetings and at their request we send them regular updates.

2.2 I have never seen anything about LINK meetings/AGM in Durham County News Magazine.

This is a council magazine that does not accept paid for advertising and will only feature articles that are council related. We have put forward articles for inclusion in the publication based on the fact that the LINK is commissioned by Durham County Council, however these have not made it into the magazine as there has been insufficient space to include them and articles relating directly to the council are given priority.

2.3 Are LINK meetings open to the public? If not, why not?

As with all organisations, County Durham LINK runs several different types of meetings and events, not all of these are open to members of the public. There are meetings which are closed for confidentiality reasons; examples of these are the Management Committee, Standards Committee and Enter and View meetings. The minutes for some of these meetings are published and are available upon request from the Host on 01325 327431 or to download from our website www.linkcountydurham.co.uk.

LINK events are generally open to members of the public and are advertised accordingly.

2.4 What does the LINK do to publicise itself?

We publicise the LINK and engage with both LINK and non LINK members though a variety of methods, these include:

- Quarterly newsletters which have a circulation of 6000, distributed to libraries, community centres and GP surgeries.
- E-bulletins which have a circulation of 500 individuals, organisations and stakeholders. The bulletin contains a request to the recipient to forward the publications on to others they think it may be of interest to.
- County Durham LINK has a website which receives on average 1238 visits a month.
- County Durham LINK has a Facebook page, which attracts interest from both members and non members.
- We also have links to our website from external partner's websites.
- Editorials have been written for local newspapers.
- Press releases have been produced.

- Events open to the public are advertised on the Northern Echo website in the events section.
- For local events like coffee mornings we advertise with posters in local venues and shops.
- County Durham LINK leaflets are sent out by County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust's Patient Experience Teams with their quarterly customer satisfaction survey.
- Leaflets have been sent to the outpatient department University Hospital North Durham and other venues.
- We have information cards displayed in community boards in three major supermarkets in County Durham.
- Enter and View visits raise the profile of the LINK, both with service users and staff members.
- We have Information Stalls at external events.
- Networking at external events by host staff and members

In relation to the last three points, 901 non LINK members have been engaged with on a one to one basis by a member of the host staff in the last six months. Enter and View reps have engaged with 157 people through their visits.

This is in addition to the engagement work that is carried out by the Management Committee, Enter and View group and other LINK members who attend meetings / events and spread the word about County Durham LINK.

2.5 I am concerned over the children's issues and the remit of children's issues, are we allowed to cover this?

This issue has come up at both our management committee and enter and view meetings. There is nothing within the legislation that states we cannot engage with, look at and even comment on the issues the children and young people have around health care

services. There is however a restriction placed on the LINK in relation to children's social care services. One reference to this can be found in the Code of Conduct relating to Local Involvement Network's visits to enter and view services, published in June 2008 by the NHS National Centre for Involvement, which County Durham LINK follows.

This code states the following organisations or persons have a duty to allow entry for the purpose of enter and view by a local involvement network:

- NHS Trusts
- NHS Foundation Trusts
- Primary Care Trusts
- Local Authorities
- a person providing primary medical services (e.g. GPs)
- a person providing primary dental services (i.e. dentists)
- a person providing primary ophthalmic services (i.e. opticians)
- a person providing pharmaceutical services (e.g. community pharmacists)
- a person who owns or controls premises where ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services are provided
- bodies or institutions which are contracted by Local Authorities or NHS Trusts, Primary Care Trusts or Strategic Health Authorities to provide care services

The code goes on to state:

“Finally, an important exclusion for LINK's to be aware of is that the duty does not apply to the observing of any activities which relate to the provision of social care services to children. This is because

the Government is of the view that it would be inappropriate for children's social care to be included as there are already effective measures in place to scrutinise and oversee children's social care and also to seek the views of children and young people in the development of their services".

No exemptions are placed upon LINK's or enter and view in relation to children's health care services within the code of conduct. So when Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust invited the LINK at the end of last year to view and comment on the changes to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) we accepted the invitation.

2.6 I am concerned about the financial surplus for member's expenses, volunteer & participant transport and training over the past 3 years?

The financial break down for member's expenses, Volunteer & Participant Transport and training for the last 3 years is:

- For the financial year ending March 2009 we made an allowance of £9,250 the actual amount paid was £3, 558.
- For the financial year ending March 2010 we made an allowance of £11,000 the actual amount paid was £11,379
- For the financial year ending March 2011 we made an allowance of £15,500 the actual amount paid was £6,526

Every year we make allowance for this expenditure within the budget, this money covers; carer's and child care costs of members, members travelling costs, (this includes transport via taxis, buses and trains), to our events or meetings they are attending on behalf of the LINK, participant travel costs, (which covers interpreters travel expenses) and training.

Reasons why an under spend might occur in this area are:

- The first financial year was a short year and many of the working/task groups were still being established and as a result we were still recruiting members.
- In the third financial year, some of the working groups completed their goals and therefore no longer met.
- Not all members claim the expenses that they are entitled to, several choose not to claim anything; however we have to make sure we make enough of a provision within the budget in case they decide to make a claim.
- We do not pay travel costs and expenses to non members; accept when we have booked them to perform a particular function at a meeting or an event, i.e. interpreters. We do however encourage non members attending our meetings and events to become members to enable them to claim expenses. But, not all of them do this.
- The attendance of meetings and events by our members is sometimes lower than we expect. To try and increase numbers we often advertise the events several times in our e-bulletins, on our website and Facebook pages as well as advertising in external publications. We also assist member's participation at our events by arranging and paying directly for taxis and interpreters upon a member's request.
- Some of the training we had expected to pay for over the last year has been sourced free of charge through partnership organisations, reducing the amount of money that we expected to pay for this service.

2.7 Should we concentrate more on the quality of accessing services and the speed of services?

County Durham LINK's work plan is influenced in the following ways:

- Members raising issues of what they feel should be being looked at in Health and Social Care services.
- We monitor any changes/consultation regarding local health and social care services.
- Our Joint Information Gathering group looks for patterns and trends in feedback regarding services.
- Our Enter and View group carry out visits to services to monitor how they perform.

Conclusion

The venue was well received and the staff did an excellent job supporting the event.

The event had both positives and negatives. Most it was well received although a few technical issues did over shadow the day and these issues should be taken into consideration when organising future events.

Recommendations

1. Consider the use of the voting system more carefully in future.
2. When advertising events to members make them aware that transport is available as some still do not realise that it can be booked through the Host.
3. Be aware of the room temperature, a few felt cold due to the air conditioning being on. However also bear in mind that temperature preferences are individual and will not suit everyone.
4. It can be difficult to ensure a meeting or event runs according to the allotted time. There were certain issues that took over at this event that meant it over ran; however every effort should be made to ensure that an event or meeting will finish on time.