



North East Lincolnshire  
LINK  
Patient Participation  
Groups Report  
2012

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## Executive Summary

The North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) is a statutory body encouraging residents to get involved in local health and social care services. It was recognised that Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) are an important way for people to engage with their General Practitioners (GPs) and influence the way the surgery is run.

However given the nature of practicing as a GP, which can vary wildly between individual surgeries, medical centres and out-of-hours services, there is no standardisation in place. Whilst this can result in services tailored specifically for the needs of those who access it, it can also mean a wide variation between the quality of engagement occurring.

The North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) is a statutory body working to improve health and social care services in North East Lincolnshire and to ensure that local people are able to influence the services which are provided for them.

In North East Lincolnshire, several new medical centres have opened recently, some combining multiple doctors' surgeries in a bespoke building. There are now fewer surgeries that operate with just a single doctor. The LINK was interested to know what services patients were receiving from the different surgeries and centres since each practice has its own Patient Participation Group. We wanted to know if patients used the group as a way to have an input into the service provided for them and if not, the reasons behind this. We also wanted to compare the level of involvement and engagement with patients between different surgeries in North East Lincolnshire.

There have been massive changes to local Health and Social Care Services both before and after the Royal Assent of the Health and Social Care Bill. We were interested to know if GPs across North East Lincolnshire had similar levels of commitment to give their patients a voice on the service they received and we wanted to know if they had

actively listened to their patients more since the recent changes.

Working with information provided by the Care Trust Plus (CTP), the LINK attempted to visit all of the Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) in North East Lincolnshire. This was a difficult process due to time and resources for LINK staff. It was important for us at the time to get an understanding of where the groups fitted in locally and how patient's views were represented.

We decided that doing a Request for Information would allow us to gather this information quickly. The Information Request was done in the form of a survey which consisted of questions surrounding the community engagement of patients.

One of the concerns raised was whether or not any GPs who hadn't merged gave the same level of community engagement with their patients and allowed them the opportunity to voice their concerns on the service they received.

We also wanted to get a feeling for how the PPGs will look in the future, and how they will fit in with the Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local HealthWatch which is due to be implemented by 1st April 2013.

## Recommendations

### **Inclusive community engagement:**

We recommend that patients are provided multiple ways to comment on the service you provide in a discreet and confidential manner that is inclusive for all.

We recommend that ALL surgeries at least provide a 'Suggestions Box' as a low maintenance method for collecting anonymous patient comments.

### **Inclusive PPG meetings:**

We recommend that ALL PPG groups are held in disabled friendly rooms all the time.

### **Work with other groups that may benefit the PPG:**

For Health and Social Care services to work better for all patients and residents then we have to ensure there are no longer any gaps in services. This is only possible by working together to get a clear idea of what is happening in and around North East Lincolnshire.

In addition to the rationale above, this is also a time of big changes both locally and nationally. In order to strengthen existing groups and create robust patient involvement, it is vital to prepare for the future of health and social care. We feel it is important that if the local CCG is to fully represent North East Lincolnshire and commission services that local people want then the CCG have to be seen to be committed to working in partnership with the PPGs.

- We recommend that Patient Participation Groups be linked up to the network with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG).
- We recommend that the Patient Participation Groups work more closely with their local LINK and that they prepare to work in partnership with local Heathwatch 2013 who will be the new consumer champion for both health and social care.

**Recognise and appreciate volunteers:**

In North East Lincolnshire there are around 157,000 residents. It is a small pool of people on a national scale and as such, we should appreciate the amount of time and energy put forward by those taking part. Your input does have a massive effect and we recognise that these local people are volunteering their time and energies for the same ends.

Volunteering is a fantastic way to keep people active and improve their job prospects and social inclusion. By providing certificates for milestones of volunteering hours, volunteers can feel much more motivated and have physical evidence of the work they have put into their volunteering.

- Quality Standards are a good way to show that you value your volunteers and that you provide an environment that supports them. The Supporting Volunteers Award is local initiative and focuses on the volunteering experience. For more information, please see <http://vanel.supportingvolunteers.org.uk/>

## Healthwatch and the impact on local PPGs

Local Healthwatch will come into form in April 2013. This will be the new consumer champion of the local people who live and use health and social care services in North East Lincolnshire. It will involve aspects of:

- Influencing
- Advice
- Signposting
- Complaints
- Community Engagement

It is important that local people understand that if they have an issue with any aspect of Health and Social Care Services locally, they can talk to local Healthwatch about their concerns. As local Healthwatch establishes itself, the question will be how and in what ways patients, service users and the local community can work with and support local Healthwatch in the future.

There will be a massive opportunity in the future to create networks that strengthen the work of Healthwatch. Despite the local CCG pathfinder in place, it remains to be seen how it will all fit together and represent the local people's views. But with better communication and integration, the commissioners, providers, service users, patients, relatives and public can come together to build better services for everyone.

Previously the North East Lincolnshire LINK has been heavily involved in community engagement work and its LINK Members have been the eyes and ears between 2008 and 2013. Formerly the Patient and Public Involvement Forum (PPI) and before that the Community Health Councils (CHC); there is a long history in this area of community engagement of local people's views to help improve the services in their own area. This has allowed local people to inform local policy to suit their particular needs.

## Thank you

A special thank you goes to those that took the time and commitment to help us look at local PPGs. All your information helps your residents see the bigger picture of all the work done locally. Those that responded included:

*Dr E Amin*

*Ashwood Surgery*

*Dr B Biswas & Partner*

*Clee Medical Centre*

*Fieldhouse Medical Group*

*Dr A Hussain*

*Dr Jethwa*

*Dr S Kumar & Partners*

*Quayside Medical Centre*

*Dr R K Mathews*

*Roxton Practice*

*Scartho Medical Centre*

*Dr R P Sharma*

*Dr A Sinha and Dr G Re*

3 unknowns returned their questionnaire without including their practice name or the name of the person completing the questionnaire.