

Coventry LINK Terms of Reference

This document sets out the structure, values and working of Coventry LINK. It was agreed by the LINK Caretaker Steering Group following a period of consultation

1.1 What is Coventry LINK

1.11 Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) are part of the implementation of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which received Royal Assent in October 2007. Local Involvement Networks (LINK) have been set up across England to:

“give communities a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered.”

1.12 The LINK covering the City of Coventry is called Coventry LINK.

1.2 Our purpose and values

1.21 Coventry LINK exists to influence, and improve the delivery of local health and social care services. The LINK covers all publicly funded health and social care services in the area for adults, as well as health services for children.

1.22 Coventry LINK’s core values for the LINK and its members are:

Independent:

Coventry LINK is an independent network of local people and groups. The LINK will set a work programme, investigate issues and use its powers to hold services to account.

Inclusive:

Coventry LINK will actively find ways to engage with, and encourage participation from, all individuals, groups and communities across Coventry.

Friendly/welcoming:

Coventry LINK will welcome and value the participation of different residents and groups in different ways respecting and valuing difference and mindful that certain behaviours and processes can be off putting to some.

Listening:

Coventry LINK will listen to and reflect people’s views and experiences of local services, and represent them without personal agendas holding sway.

Rigorous:

Coventry LINK will be thorough in the work that it does and strive to undertake high quality work that is well researched and executed.

Open and accountable:

Coventry LINK will ensure accountability to its membership and the wider community, and will carry out its work in a transparent way, with clear decision making processes.

Constructive:

Coventry LINK will work in partnership with existing groups and networks to achieve objectives. It will be a critical friend to service providers and commissioners, working collaboratively and impartially pointing out what is working and what needs improving.

1.3 How we carry out our role

- 1.31 Coventry LINK will take a bottom up approach to its work, engaging with Coventry communities and gathering feedback on services in different ways.
- 1.32 Coventry LINK is a network of networks. It will work collaboratively with other, networks, voluntary/community groups, partnerships and service user groups. It will seek to strengthen voices and to gather and collate information from different sources. Coventry LINK will work jointly with others.
- 1.33 Coventry LINK will focus on achieving outcomes from its work, such as:
- services which are shaped to meet people's needs;
 - services which are improved as a result of people's feedback on experiences;
 - increased confidence in decision making processes used by health and social care services.

1.4 Our Powers

- 1.41 The activities and remit of LINK's are outlined in section 221 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Chapter 28), and The Local Involvement Network Regulations 2008 (Statutory Instruments 2008, no. 528)

In summary Coventry LINK has the power to:

- Make reports and recommendations and get a reply within a set amount of time;
- Ask for information and get a reply within a set amount of time;
- Enter some types of premises where services are delivered to find out how they operate;

- Refer matters to Overview and Scrutiny Committees in local Councils (made up of local councillors). In Coventry this is Scrutiny Committee 4.

2 Ways of being involved in Coventry LiNk

2.1 Coventry LiNk offers a range of ways for people to get involved. Individual members of the public and voluntary/community groups can choose from different levels of involvement and can move between these to become more or less involved.

2.2 The types of involvement are:

2.21 LiNk Participants:

There are no criteria for participation in the LiNk, the aim is for open access. It will be possible to participate in the LiNk anonymously in some instances. Participants will get involved in LiNk activities which suit and interest them. This might include attending a LiNk meeting, taking part in a focus group or filling out a questionnaire.

2.22 LiNk Members:

Members are Individuals and groups that sign up to receive regular updates on the work of the LiNk. They have more of a say in the LiNk, including the right to vote for members of the Steering Group and, in most instances, the right to put themselves forward for election to the Steering Group. Members can take on regular volunteering roles including involvement in LiNk working groups.

Anyone aged 16 and over can be a LiNk member, and members can be:

- Individual people who live in Coventry,
or,
people who care for people who live in Coventry who use Coventry health and/or social care services,
or
people who live on the borders of Coventry but have a GP in Coventry
- A representative of a voluntary or community group that operates in Coventry.

Signing up as a member means that individuals and group representatives are expected to uphold the values of the LiNk stated in this document.

Any organisation signing up for LiNk membership will have one vote through an identified nominated person.

Members will remain a part of LiNk until they request to leave or, in exceptional circumstances, if they are asked to leave as a result of conduct deemed to be incompatible with the LiNk Terms of Reference.

2.23 LINK volunteers:

LINK volunteers are LINK members who give some of their time regularly to undertake aspects of LINK work. They are involved in planning and undertaking the LINK work programme.

Some LINK volunteers will be trained and CRB checked to be “Authorised Representatives” who can visit some NHS and social care premises as per the work programme and Enter and View Policy and Procedures.

LINK is also recruiting Community Champion volunteers to spread the word about LINK within communities.

Training will be provided to LINK volunteers to enable people to carry out their roles.

3 Structure of Coventry LINK

3.1 LINK Steering Group

The LINK Steering Group will replace the Caretaker Steering Group as the LINKs governing group after an open election process.

The role of the Steering Group is:

- To maintain the LINK’s mission, purpose, values;
- To prioritise work and ensure that the LINK devises and delivers effective work plans;
- To ensure an open and transparent LINK where all actions and decisions can be explained to the public and are regularly communicated across the LINK and to the outside world. This includes producing an Annual Report and accounting for all financial activity;
- To ensure compliance across the LINK with its governing principles, policies and procedures and legal requirements;
- To ensure the quality and continuity of the LINK messages across reports and recommendations made in the name of the LINK, monitoring any resulting activity, and maintaining the reputation of the LINK across all its activities, projects and working relationships;
- To regularly review the LINK’s effectiveness and take steps to ensure LINK continues to work well.

3.12 Composition

Agreed 5/10/09

The Steering Group will be drawn from the LINK's membership in the form of:

- 9 elected individual members;
- 1 representative from the Voluntary Action Coventry Board of trustees;
- 6 co-opted representatives from the Coventry voluntary and community sector.

Individual LINK members can put themselves forward to be candidates for election to the Steering Group through a simple self nomination process.

3.13 Restrictions on nominations and election to the Steering Group

As the LINK Steering Group is a non political body membership of the Steering group is not open to local councillors or MPs.

Also, managers of health and social care services and those involved in the commissioning of services cannot stand for election to the LINK Steering Group.

Anyone with a significant financial interest in health or social care services cannot stand for election to the Steering Group.

The Steering Group has the option of making co-options either to balance the membership of the group or to fill vacancies prior to elections taking place.

3.14 Voluntary and Community Sector places

Voluntary and community sector organisations will be invited to apply for places on the Steering Group by providing information about how they will contribute, who they represent, and how they will share information with their service users etc.

Representatives from voluntary/community organisations cannot be mandated by their organisations/groups to such an extent that they cannot act for the benefit of the LINK as a whole.

3.15 Steering Group term

In order to stagger the end points for elected members, the individual candidates with the highest numbers of votes will serve 3 years and the remaining four candidates will serve 2 years.

Each individual can serve one 3 year term and must then have a 1 year break.

Co-options will be for a period of 2 years.

3.16 Decision making

Decisions will normally made by consensus but if there is a vote each individual Steering Group member will have one vote. The quorum is 5 members or 50% of Steering Group membership, whichever is fewer.

Decisions that fall within the remit of the LINK Steering Group are:

- a) what work priorities the LINK will undertake and how resources will be used to undertake LINK work
- b) Which services will be the subject of an 'enter and view' visit, when this will take place and who will be involved in carrying out such visits
- c) What the LINK is going to spend money on
- d) Whether to make a report or recommendation
- h) Whether to refer something to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- i) Whether to report anything to anyone else

Coventry LINK Working Groups will report back to the LINK Steering Group about progress and provide the group with the results of any work undertaken.

The Steering Group can delegate further decision making to Working Groups if it sees that this is of benefit for particular work streams.

Coventry LINK will ensure that the decisions it makes are reflective of the priorities of the local community by conducting community outreach and engagement work; gathering ongoing feedback from the local population and ensuring transparency and openness in LINK work.

Coventry LINK will use a decision making matrix and scoring mechanism to prioritise issues for inclusion in the LINK Work Programme. It is the Steering Group's role to make decisions on work priorities after considering the issues which have been raised with the LINK and the results of consultations.

The Steering Group will set the priorities for the work of the LINK Host staff in conjunction with the LINK Project Manager and delegate tasks and associated decision making as it sees fit.

3.17 Meetings

The Steering Group will meet at least bi-monthly. All Steering Group meetings will be open to LINK members to attend and observe.

3.18 Non-attendance

Any individual who does not attend 4 consecutive Steering Group meetings or attends less than 3 per year will be deemed to have left the group unless there are extenuating circumstances explained to the Host and the Steering Group agrees that the member can stay on the group.

The Steering Group may decide to call for a different nominated person from a voluntary and community groups if the original person is no longer available.

3.2 Working Groups

3.21 Purpose

Working groups will be established to carry out elements of the LINK work programme. These groups will be flexible and usually time limited in their work. Their activities will be supported and facilitated the Host organisation.

Working Groups will meet as per their own schedule.

3.22 Working group membership

People who wish to volunteer their time on working groups will be recruited from the wider LINK membership. Coventry LINK's conflict of interest policy will determine who can be involved in particular pieces of work or if the involvement of some people should be limited due to their other interests.

Authorised Representatives for 'enter and view' work will be members of LINK Working Groups, although not all Working Group members will necessarily be Authorised Representatives. Authorised Representative will be recruited in line with the Coventry LINK Enter and View Policy and Procedures.

Participation in the work of working groups will be facilitated from all levels of involvement within LINK.

Partnership work with other user, involvement, or multi-agency fora will also be facilitated as appropriate. The knowledge and expertise of particular agencies and voluntary sector organisations may also be called on to inform work.

3.33 Decision making

Decisions are normally made by consensus but if there is a vote each individual has one vote. Working Groups should refer matters for ratification to the Steering Group. The Steering Group will authorise: proposals for Enter and View and any reports, recommendations or findings. Working Groups will usually be able to make decision about what information to request to support or as part of their work but all requests must be processed by the Host staff team.

3.34 The First Working Groups/Theme groups

Between August 2009 and March 2010 four time-limited Working Groups will be established to undertake LINK work.

Volunteers will be recruited to be involved in these groups. Some of these volunteers will be CRB checked and trained to become authorised "Authorised Representatives".

The Working Groups will be Themed around service areas:

- a) Mental health services
- b) Adult social care services
- c) Hospital services

- d) Community health services (including GP services and other primary healthcare)

Each Theme Group will carry out specific pieces of work as per the LINK work programme and to build relationships with commissioners and providers as required.

Working Groups will report back to the Steering Group and communicate with other Working Groups to ensure work is connected up.

3.3 Other structures and relationships

3.31 Groups within the LINK family

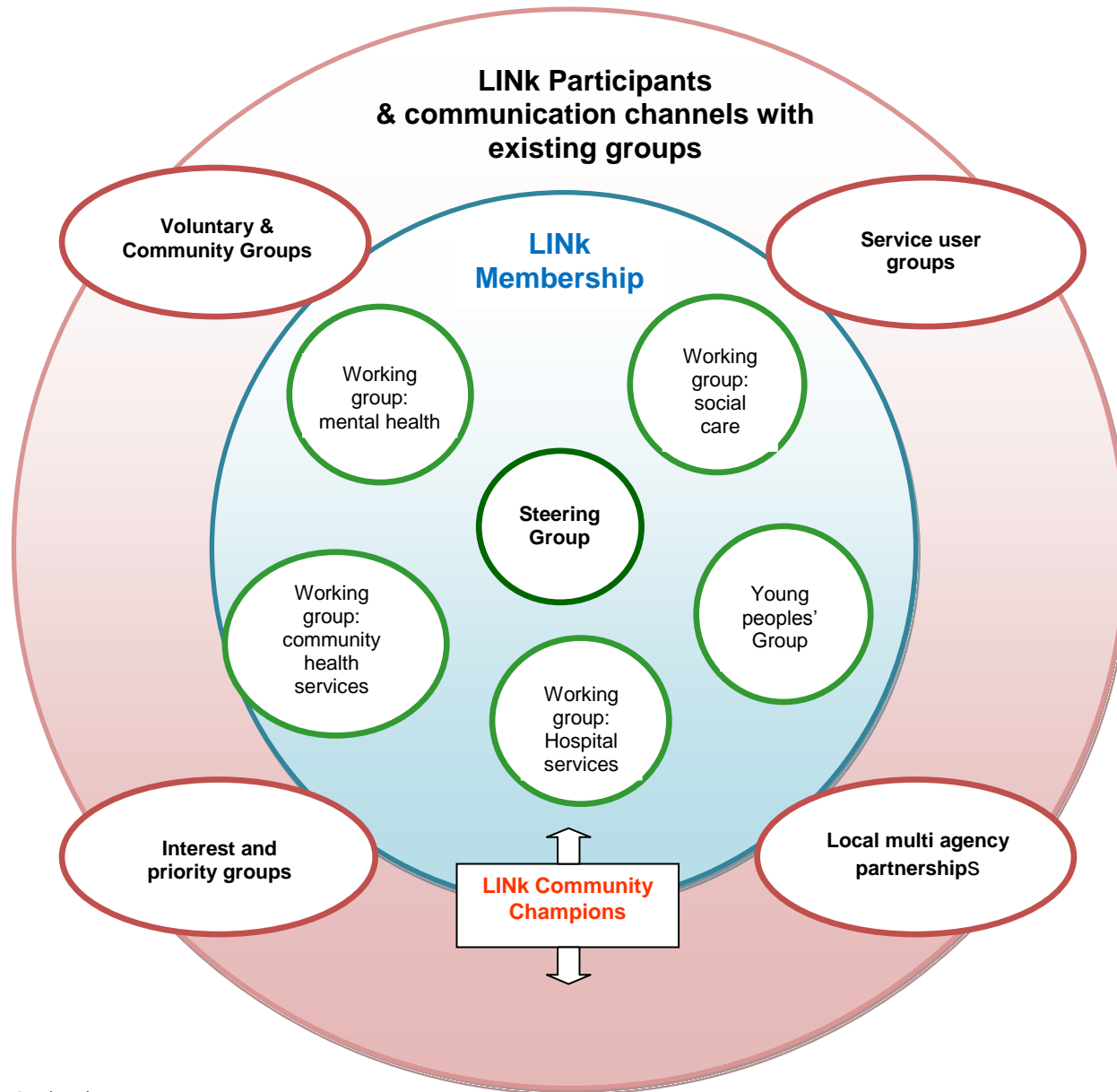
Coventry LINK aims to be a network connecting up different activity. Therefore the LINK is committed to working with others and to connect existing groups of service users and interest groups to the LINK structure by establishing effective channels of two way communication.

Coventry LINK will establish channels to reach priority and interest groups within the population of Coventry to gain views and feedback to support the LINK's work.

3.32 Relationships with statutory agencies

Coventry LINK recognises that much can be gained by working with the statutory sector agencies which commission and deliver health and social care services, and that there is potential for such joint work to have significant beneficial impact on how services are delivered and commissioned.

Coventry LINK Structure



Key

Participants – members of the public the LINK talks to and relationships with external groups and partnerships such as those listed.

Members – individuals & voluntary and community groups who receive information about and have a say in the LINK.

Working groups – time limited groups made up of **volunteers** from the membership who do pieces of work as per LINK work plan

Steering Group – governing group elected from and by members

LINK Community Champions – Volunteers who act as a communication link between communities or interest groups and the LINK.

4 Standards of conduct

- 4.1 Coventry LINK expects member-volunteers to sign up to and follow the Coventry LINK Code of Conduct and the LINK's policies and procedures. Should concerns about standards of conduct be raised within the LINK or by external organisation or individuals then the matter will be dealt with using the LINK Standards of Conduct Procedure.

5 Breach of procedure

- 5.1 Breaches of procedure may be identified through the Coventry LINK Problem Solving Procedure, the Comments and Complaints Procedure or directly to a member of Host staff or of the Steering Group.

If decisions of the Steering Group are not followed, or procedures are breached, the Steering Group will apply the LINK Problem Solving Procedure and/or Standards of Conduct Procedure.

In cases it considers serious, the Steering Group may suspend or terminate the LINK membership or volunteering of any person the Steering Group considers has breached procedures or not complied with group decisions. This includes membership of working groups or the Steering Group; community champion roles, and could also include suspension or termination of the withdrawal of the Authorised Representative role.

5.2 Steering Group breach

If the Steering Group discovers that it has breached its own procedures, it must act as quickly as possible to remedy the breach, in order to ensure valid decisions are taken. This may involve referring a matter to the whole LINK for a vote.

In serious cases of breach the matter may be referred to the Host organisation for action.

5.3 Breaches of mandate and procedure by the Host

If LINK project staff are thought to have breached their mandate or LINK procedures this should be raised with the LINK Project Manager. If the LINK Project Manager is thought to be in breach then the matter should be raised with Voluntary Action Coventry's Director of Policy and Partnership. If the Host generally is thought to be in breach the LINK Steering Group should raise the concerns with the Host and convene a meeting to discuss the issues.

6 Review and changes to governance

- 6.1 The permanent governance arrangements will be reviewed after a year.
- 6.2 Changes to the governing document can be made by the Steering Group following consultation with the membership and will be ratified at an Annual meeting by a simple vote.

7 Work of Coventry LINK

- 7.1 Part of the Steering Group's role is to prioritise work and ensure that the work programme reflects the LINK's resources.
- 7.2 Coventry LINK will gather information from a wide variety of sources to inform its work planning including information from the community and liaison with service providers and commissioners.
- 7.3 Work programmes or their individual elements will not be based on the individual concerns of members or volunteers - evidence of wider issues for Coventry residents is required.
- 7.4 An annual work programme will be devised each April following consultation on issues
- 7.5 A bottom up approach to establishing issues regarding health and social care services will be undertaken through community outreach, questionnaires, focus groups and meetings
- 7.6 The Steering Group will consider recommendations for inclusion in the work programme from working groups.

End of Terms of Reference