

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

AGENDA ITEM 18B 3 April 2008

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

LINKS REPORT

LINKs is a Government concept, at present run by the County Council. The aim of LINKs is to give the public more say in their care. The concept is good; LINKs will take over from the PPI forums from 1 April. The idea is to cover with a (?) seamless link, Primary Care, Secondary Care, Mental Health and Social care. Carers and Voluntary groups are also to be involved, as are the ethnic minorities. Quite how representatives for all these groups will be chosen has not been made clear. Importantly, for us, the Government would like to see Patient and Public Governors involved. This would reach out to a far wider public than the previous PPI forums, which will be disbanded on 31 March.

One of the biggest problems encountered in Cambridgeshire is geographical. LINKs will cover the whole area of Cambridgeshire PCT. The area is huge, running up to the Wash, and including the Fenlands, and Wisbech. I am sure every one will see that covering all the groups included in the first paragraph could make LINKs in Cambridgeshire a huge, unwieldy organisation. There is a great deal of hard work to be done to make sure all relevant groups are involved. I gather that other counties in England are having similar problems.

Finance is also a problem. At present, I gather the County Council are funding the Way-finding and Working Group, with little funding. I believe that the Government gave each county only £10,000. A host company for LINKs was up for tender; I gather that a tender has been accepted from a local company, Castle Acre, who previously looked after the PPI forums. Hopefully this will ease the burden on the County Council.

A further complication is that so far the Government has issued no rules as to the way LINKs is to be run. This makes very difficult for either the way finding or working groups to come to any meaningful decisions.

So far I have attended two meetings with Brenda, one in January, and one in February, the next one is on April 30th in March. The meeting in January was interesting. The vast majority of the meeting was made up of PPI forum members. They not surprisingly were resentful that the PPI forums were being disbanded. There was also palpable hostility to Governors being involved. Brenda and I pointed out that that to a certain extent Governors and PPI forum members were duplicating the same role; that of critical friend to the Hospital, and that if we both worked together we would be more effective. It was also pointed out that, at present Governors of Addenbrookes can only be involved in the Addenbrookes part of LINKs.

The second meeting was better, although the Government had not, and still has not issued any guidelines. The attitude towards Governors was more positive. Most of the meeting was taken discussing how information about LINKs was to be disseminated. Many ideas were forthcoming. Hopefully, Castle Acre will help set up an informative, easy to comprehend website. Ideas were floated about press releases. Possible mentions in the local press. Parish and village magazines were also seen as good places to disseminate publicity about LINKs. A publicity pamphlet clarifying the aim of LINKs is to be out to appropriate places, for example, GP and Dentist surgeries. They will also be available at many other outlets, amongst them Addenbrookes. Brenda again emphasised the importance of getting the support and input from the hundreds of patient support groups in

the county. On leaving I was told that it was not felt that either Brenda or myself had, had enough positive in-put into LINKs, Brenda is to investigate this further.

Mary Chaloner
Chairman Membership/PPI working group