



# The Bradford LINK

## ANNUAL REPORT

**2008 – 2009**

HELPING THE COMMUNITY SPEAK WITH A STRONGER VOICE



Bradford LINK is here to help people make a difference to health and social care.

We have been out and about finding out what really matters to people. One of our jobs is to bring people together with the same concerns so that they can share tasks between them and because there is strength in numbers.

## **How we listen**

During the past year we have talked to people where they meet and invited them to our own events.

We have been to village halls, voluntary groups and health and social care providers.

We have listened to what people do and don't like about healthcare and social care and asked them about changes that they would like to see in the future.

We have taken hundreds of phone calls about everything from lost laundry to signposting in hospitals. So what have we learned and what have we done with all that information?

## **Our successes**

First of all, we have found out that lots of people share the same concerns about health and social care. We have a database that helps us to put them in touch with other people who might want to work on issues with them. For example, we can quickly find out who has complained about not being able to see a doctor. Then we can see whether this is because they have to wait too long or because the surgery is not open at the right time.

Bradford LINK is there so that everybody can connect and make a difference. Our database helps everyone to find someone else to work with to improve health and social care. Soon we will be able to use it to send out useful information to people who are interested in a particular area like mental health or care homes.

We have also worked hard at making sure that everyone can understand what Bradford LINK is all about. That means making our newsletter and website as easy to read as possible. Our database tells us how people want us to communicate with them. This is so that everyone can be part of Bradford LINK. If you have a disability, do not speak English or do not have a computer, we will help you to make your voice heard.

We have also brought people together to discuss health and social care issues and talk about how things could be made better.



## **Bradford LINK development group**

This is where we make decisions and talk about the work of Bradford LINK. Meetings are open to anyone who lives or works in the Bradford district and people from voluntary, statutory and private organisations. We have had four meetings and they have included workshops on:

- Adult mental health services
- Social care
- Older people and depression
- Primary care (like doctors, dentists and opticians)
- Better information for disabled people
- Helping to make sure that you get the services you want
- Going to hospital
- Making sure that people's voices are heard when decisions are made

More people gave us their ideas about health and social care at our four launch events, which were held in Bradford, Keighley, Ilkley and Saltaire. We also went out to nine villages around the district so that we could talk to anyone who could not travel into the town centres. We helped to organise an event so that Gypsies and travellers could let health and social care providers know what they need. We have also been to patient council meetings and self-help groups like Diabetes UK and Breatheasy.

## **How do we make change happen?**

We set up working groups to look at particular issues. For example, we will be helping the Mental Health Forum to make sure that service users get the support that they need. Another group will be looking at how to help older people with depression. We have also brought together a team of people to

help the health and social care watchdog – a new organisation called the Care Quality Commission - to check that Bradford people get the services they want.

We have produced a written report about adult mental health. We talked to 100 people including lesbian, gay and bisexual people, former refugees, asylum seekers and carers of people with mental health problems. We also spoke to people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and south Asian women. This report was written so that it was easy to understand. We hope that the information will be used to make sure that people with mental health problems and their carers get the help that they need.

We will let all the people who spoke to us know what changes have been made because of the report. We are talking to NHS Bradford and Airedale – we want to make sure that it uses this information when it decides what services need to be provided.



Keighley is getting a new health and wellbeing centre and we want to talk to as many people as possible about the sort of services they want. We have organised five events and listened to over 160 people. We will write reports about the events to let healthcare and social care providers know what people have told us. We expect this will help them to decide which services to provide in Keighley. We have also made a film to show them how Bradford LINK talks to people. They might also want to organise the same sort of events.

Soon we expect to see that the work that we are doing will start to make a difference to services.

Bradford LINK has asked health and social care providers seven questions that they must reply to by law. They answered five of the questions within 20 days. The tPCT answered questions about footcare services, dentists' fees, alternative therapies and counselling. Bradford District Care Trust answered a question about how people can visit a hospital. The tPCT did not answer two of the questions. These were asked by people who wanted to know who went to its meetings about adult mental health and information about the meetings.

Bradford LINK can ask Bradford Council Health Improvement Committee and Bradford Council Social Care Improvement Committee to look at issues about health and social care. We have not had to do this yet.

## **Going forward, what we do**

So what are we going to do next?

We will carry on working on our six key issues, which are:

- Adult mental health
- Older people and depression
- Health and wellbeing in Keighley
- Access to primary care
- Making sure that people can find and understand the information they need.
- Checking whether health and social care providers are doing a good job.

We shall carry on holding development meetings with workshops. These will bring together people to talk about their issues and help them to work together to make things better.

Bradford LINK is about bringing people together so that they can make change happen.

So far the Bradford LINK support group has spent lots of time answering telephone calls from people who want to complain about health and social care. This is good because we can put the information on to our database and see whether other people have had the same problems. Then we can ask them whether they want to work together to change things for the better. We

have also heard some good things about health and social care. For example, we have been told that Horton Bank Top is an excellent doctors' practice.



We have done a lot of work to get Bradford LINK up and running. We have already helped lots of people to make their voices heard but there is so much more that we could do.

## **What we do not do**

Bradford LINK does NOT deal with complaints about things that only affect one person. We will help them to find the right way to make a complaint using the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) or Bradford Council adult and community services.

## **Area of work**

Bradford LINK works within the areas covered by Bradford Metropolitan District Council (BMDC).

From time to time we may work across the boundaries. We will find ways of working with other LINKs close to Bradford district so that we do not repeat work that is already being done. It will also be clear which LINK does what.

## **Governance and monitoring group**

The governance and monitoring group is the only place in Bradford LINK where there are rules about what jobs people do and how they must work. The group has a chair and a vice chair and up to 12 people can be members. The group writes policies for Bradford LINK, which show how it should work. It checks what the paid staff are doing, and it decides what work Bradford LINK should do and which work is most important.

The group meets regularly and it has worked hard to make sure that Bradford LINK has everything it needs to do its job properly. The group has written a number of policies, including rules about how people using Bradford LINK should behave. There are also rules about how Bradford LINK will treat different types of people and how it will treat volunteers. It is now writing some more policies.

The group has looked at the wide range of skills and experience it has, and it is now looking at other skills that it would like to have. For example, we know we need some new members who know about social care.

The group is happy to start new jobs, supports the paid staff of Bradford LINK and is beginning to work very well together. All the members of the government and monitoring group have worked hard to make sure people know about Bradford LINK.

## **Communications group**

The Bradford LINK has a communication group, which helps to make sure that everyone can find and understand the information that they need about us. It also makes sure that we find out what they think and pass this information on to health and social care providers.

The communication group had three meetings. The things that it has done so far include:

- talking about Bradford LINK on community and hospital radio
- talking about Bradford LINK at neighbourhood forums
- helping to write the Bradford LINK communication strategy
- writing the Bradford LINK annual report
- helping to write guides to using simple language that people can understand
- helping to find ways of talking to people who have different communication needs

We have already used lots of different ways of telling people what Bradford LINK is doing. These include our website, our newsletters and articles in other newsletters and newspapers. We have also put up posters and talked to people and groups face to face.

## **Enter and view group**

Bradford LINK will soon have an enter and view group, which can visit places where health and social care services are provided. These people will write reports about what they find out. We will be giving them training to do this.

## **Bradford LINK support group**

The Bradford LINK has four paid staff, and they are the support group. These people help everyone else who is part of the Bradford LINK, including the work groups, the development group, the governance and monitoring group, the communication group and the enter and view group.

The support group is managed by Melvyn Newton. There is also an information and communication officer, an information and research officer and an outreach and development worker. The group usually works at Keighley Voluntary Services but it also uses an office at Bradford Resource Centre.

## **Money used by Bradford LINK**

Bradford Council gives Keighley Voluntary Services money to spend on Bradford LINK.

Between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, Keighley Voluntary Services spent £178,147.48 on Bradford LINK. Most of the money was used to pay for the support group. We spent £157,837.19 on their salaries and other costs like the offices that they work in.

We also spent:

- £9,049.84 on meetings and events
- £4,606.18 on setting up Bradford LINK and making sure it is doing its job
- £551.19 on other ways of finding out what people think
- £4,151.21 on the Bradford LINK website
- £1,951.878 on letting people know what Bradford LINK does

At the end of the year, £60,448.27 was left over and we are allowed to spend this next year instead.

**If you want to know more about the Bradford LINK or you are interested in being involved, please contact:**

**Bradford LINK – connect and make a difference**

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