



# Sheffield LINK

A brief guide  
to what it is  
and how you  
can be involved

# Contents

Introducing Sheffield LiNk .....	03
Key facts about Sheffield LiNk .....	04
How Sheffield LiNk works .....	06
Our legal powers .....	07
More about 'enter and view' visits .....	08
Issues Sheffield LiNk can deal with .....	09
Joining Sheffield LiNk .....	10
Getting involved .....	11
Contact details .....	Back Cover

# Introducing Sheffield LINK

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) aim to give local people more influence over how health and social care services in their area are planned and delivered.

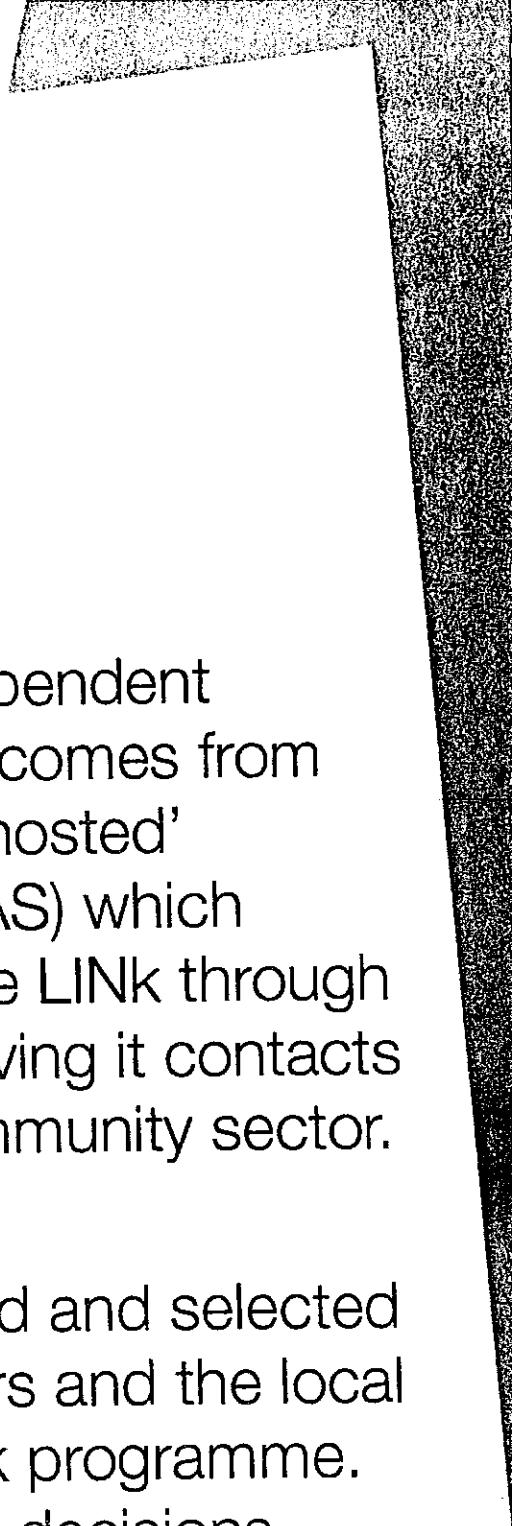
Their main role is to ensure that the views of local people and service users are heard by those who commission and deliver these services. Every local authority in England with social care responsibility has a LINK.

Sheffield LINK is a completely independent network made up of local individuals and community organisations with an interest in health and social care.

# Key facts about Sheffield LINK

Sheffield LINK can investigate all the health and social care services in our city that are publicly funded to any extent. This includes the NHS, Sheffield City Council and independent providers who are publicly funded. The only exclusion is for social care services relating to children.

The main role of the Sheffield LINK is to involve local people to help improve local health and social care provision in the city. It can also monitor the care that service providers give and report upon its findings.



Sheffield LINK is an entirely independent body although the funding for it comes from the Department of Health. It is 'hosted' by Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) which provides essential support to the LINK through infrastructure, staffing and by giving it contacts with the local voluntary and community sector.

A Governing Board of 15 elected and selected representatives of LINK members and the local community sets the LINK's work programme. Standing committees make key decisions about day-to-day work and a small support team carries out much of this.

# How Sheffield LiNk works

## Sheffield LiNk can:

- ask people what they like and dislike about local health and social care services;
- seek ideas from the public to help improve services;
- support consultations on new or revised services;
- explore specific issues of concern to members of the community;
- carry out visits to local services to see at first hand how well they are working;
- share the views of local people with those who commission, provide and manage local services;
- work with those commissioners and providers to improve local services.

# Our legal powers

To support its work, LINk has the legal power to:

- ask service providers for information about their services and expect a response within 20 working days.;
- undertake 'enter and view' visits to see the services being provided. These must be carried out by properly trained and checked 'authorised representatives';
- issue reports or make recommendations about a service and receive an initial response within 20 working days;
- refer matters to the local Overview and Scrutiny Committee if it has been unable to resolve matters in other ways.

## More about 'enter and view' visits

Sheffield LINK has a strict Code of Conduct for 'enter and view' visits. Only 'authorised representatives' who have undergone specific training and had an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check can carry out a visit.

Although LINKs can do unannounced visits, Sheffield LINK has always worked with service providers to find a mutually convenient time. Providers do have the right to refuse entry if they believe it will interrupt the smooth delivery of care and some parts of premises are exempt, such as a resident's bedroom in a care home.

# What issues can Sheffield LINK deal with?

Legally Sheffield LINK cannot deal with individual issues or complaints although we can advise on where else to go. Also, it cannot examine children's social care issues.

It does, however, keep a log of all issues mentioned and can take one up if mentioned repeatedly. Unfortunately, limited resources mean it is impossible to look at all issues.

However, if individuals or groups have a particular issue they want to take forward and it affects more than one person, LINK can support them and use its legal powers where appropriate.

# Joining Sheffield LINK

Anyone who lives in Sheffield or uses local health or social care services can join Sheffield LINK. Membership is free and is open to individuals or representatives of charities and community groups.

All members automatically receive the monthly LINK Bulletin either in paper or electronic form. This contains information about what's happening in local health and social care, about any LINK events, all current consultations and other opportunities to get involved.

Join online at **[www.sheffieldlink.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldlink.org.uk)**  
or contact us on **0114 253 6690**  
or **[info@sheffieldlink.org.uk](mailto:info@sheffieldlink.org.uk)**.

# Being involved with Sheffield LINK

How involved people become with Sheffield LINK is entirely up to them.

Some members come to an occasional event or give their views on consultations of particular interest to them. Some just read the bulletin to keep up-to-date with what we are doing and what's happening locally.

Other people choose to become more involved and there are opportunities to:

- represent LINK on local boards and committees
- become an authorised representative
- join or form an action group to look into an issue in more detail.



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