



St Helens LINK

Local Involvement Network

Annual Report 2010/2011

1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011



The LINK... has
made people's
voices heard

St Helens LINK employs 3 members of staff:

Emma Rodriguez dos Santos

LINK Manager

Jayne Parkinson

Outreach Worker

Helen Saarma

Communication and Information Worker

It is governed by a management board made up of democratically elected local representatives. LINK operates by the seven Nolan Principles and Respect, Dignity and Equality underpins its Code of Conduct.

St Helens LINK Board

Roman Babij

Harry Blackman (until June 2010)

Eddie Cunningham

Jonathan Griffith

Margaret Leys

Bernie Lightfoot

Sam Omar

Patricia Robinson (until June 2010)

Brenda Smith

Claire Wildman

Joan Young

LINK Enter and View Representatives

Harry Blackman (until June 2010)

Eddie Cunningham

Jonathan Griffith

Ann Louise Jones

Margaret Leys

Bernie Lightfoot

Brenda Smith

Claire Wildman

Joan Young

During this period, St Helens LINK's host organisation, St Helens CVS, merged with Halton VCA to form Halton and St Helens Voluntary and Community Action.

St Helens LINK is hosted by:

Halton and St Helens Voluntary and
Community Action

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24 Church Street

St Helens

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Chief Officer: Sally Yeoman



Cover photo of apple heart courtesy of Clare Bloomfield.

Introduction

St Helens LINK aims to give people a say in the health and adult social care issues which affect them and take action to make sure services are responsive to local need. This Annual Report sets out the main activities and achievements of St Helens LINK during 2010-11. We involve a wide range of people, gather views, make these views heard, monitor and scrutinise services and work in partnership to ensure people's health and social needs are being met.

After consulting with people in St Helens during 2009/10, priorities for LINK's workplan were: Access to Information, Attitudes of Staff and Hygiene. Task groups were set up for each issue and this report outlines the work of each. These task groups helped to raise and identify issues of concern and work in partnership with services to bring about changes.

In particular, LINK has:

- helped local NHS Trusts to make their patient information more accessible,
- improved hygiene practices in local care homes and
- identified ways in which poor attitudes amongst staff and patients can be tackled.

Two new strands of work emerged from public feedback; Dignity and Transport. During the year, LINK encouraged services to prioritise dignity issues and also brought about improvements in local public transport facilities.

LINK seeks to listen and make views known. Significant other pieces of work this year included:

- a review of pharmacy services
- a proposal for a Centre for Independent Living,
- increasing service user involvement in plans to redesign substance misuse services and
- listening to the needs and experiences of people affected by dementia.

The NHS is currently changing. Reforms proposed as a result of the NHS White Paper 'Equity and Excellence' include transferring responsibility for commissioning health services from Primary Care Trusts to groups of GPs, giving local authorities a greater role in public health and allowing a wider range of organisations to tender for and deliver health care services. Significantly for LINKs, these proposals also include the transformation of LINKs into HealthWatch by October 2012.

It will be a challenging year ahead, not least as HealthWatch's roles and responsibilities at a local level are yet to be clarified.

In times of change and upheaval, it is even more crucial that people have a voice. Giving people the opportunity to know what is happening, how it affects them, how to get involved and helping to ensure these views are heard and listened to have always been fundamental to LINK's role, and will continue to be so in the future.

Getting involved in LINK's work need not take a lot of your time. Share your experiences, make a suggestion, visit our website, attend a meeting, become a LINK member, receive information, fill in a survey, send us an email but have your say. Letting us know what needs to be changed and why means that we as a LINK Board can then take action.

St Helens LINK Board

St Helens LINK: Involving the wider community

Involvement should be at the heart of a LINK. It is only by encouraging the involvement of as wide a range of people as possible that LINK can be seen to truly represent its local population.

LINK's current membership represents the needs of a diverse range of groups, including Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) communities, people with physical and learning disabilities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual groups and people with mental health, drug and alcohol problems. LINK has also actively sought to engage with travellers, people who self-harm and the homeless.

Outreach activities have taken place at local libraries, fun days, festivals, roadshows and community events. Contact has been made with Polish, Chinese, Bangladeshi and Indian communities and with BME Community Development Workers. When carrying out surveys, St Helens LINK has sought the views of people in markets, shopping centres, parks and community centres and at a range of community events.

Specific work this year includes:

- Consulting with people about a proposed Centre for Independent Living through a British Sign Language presentation at the Deafness Resource Centre. This led to specific recommendations being included in the report about improving access and changing the layout.
- Organising four Healthier Communities events with the LISTEN project which reached 150 people and highlighted the range of health-related support available locally.
- Providing developmental support to three self-help groups: Autism and Aspergers', Dual Diagnosis (Mental Health and Substance Misuse) and Epilepsy. This helped them to attract new members, publicise their work and develop their capacity.

What we have done: Support for services for the Polish Community

St Helens LINK met members of the local Polish community at a community event and heard about the difficulties faced when trying to access hospital services. Friends and relatives were relied on for interpreting and amongst some staff there seemed little awareness of the Language Line service. This issue was raised at LINK's Access to Information Task Group and as a result, NHS Halton and St Helens sent information to all its Community Service Managers with guidelines of how to access interpreters and translators. LINK's publicity leaflet was also translated into Polish. However, the most pressing issues for the Polish community go beyond translation services and include access to education, employment and welfare services. There is now a regular communication route between LINK and a community member representing issues for European Union migrants.

St Helens LINK listens to what you say

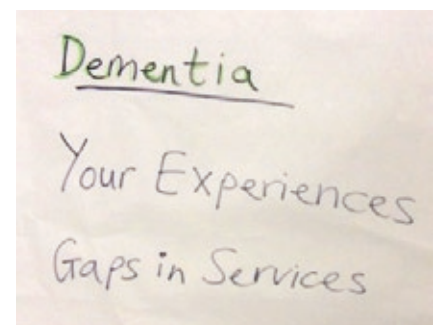
Gathering views is integral to our work. It is only by listening to the views of local people that we can find out if services are meeting your needs, and if they are not, how services should be provided.

St Helens LINK has been involved in several major pieces of research during the year.

- **The Pharmacy Needs Assessment (PNA)** for Halton and St Helens. This aimed to identify needs and gaps in pharmacy service provision and suggest solutions. It involved St Helens and Halton LINKs and Councils, NHS Halton and St Helens and the LISTEN project. Half the 405 responses were from St Helens. People wanted more publicity about emergency/out-of-hours services and to be able to receive items on a hospital prescription at a pharmacy of their choice. These were included and published in the PNA in February 2010.
- **The Centre for Independent Living (CIL).** This aimed to ask views about a proposed CIL for St Helens which would help people with long term conditions and disabilities to gain control over their lives. 87 people responded, 44% of which were potential service users. A recommendation to improve communication between the Council and service users led to a Communications Subgroup being set up. As a result of feedback, the proposed plans included a Changing Places facility.
- **Dementia.** Consultation events were held in St Helens and Halton to gather views from people affected by dementia as part of ongoing work across Halton and St Helens to look at dementia care pathways. These events highlighted a delay in receiving a diagnosis of dementia, a lack of information about the support available and a lack of specialised knowledge. Feedback from the events showed that people valued being listened to and similar events are being planned for 2011 as a result.

“We would like to acknowledge LINKs staff in Halton and St Helens for their support and hard work in gathering and analysing over 400 responses from a wide range of community organisations and individuals on their views of current and possible future pharmacy services provision.”

Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, NHS Halton and St Helens, Feb 2011



People give their views on dementia services.

St Helens LINK listens to what you say

- **Tell Us Your Story Postcard Campaign.**

This freepost postcard asked for people's experiences within LINK's priority issues of Attitudes of Staff, Hygiene and Access to Information. Five thousand postcards were distributed through libraries, community centres, GP practices, chemists, churches and voluntary and community groups. The returns to date have been split between positive and negative comments, mainly about staff attitudes. The postcards continue to be a useful way of collecting information from people who would like further support from LINK in addressing their health and social care needs.

- **Hygiene Survey.**

This work was carried out by St Helens LINK's Hygiene Task Group and aimed to capture the public's perception of hygiene practices at Whiston Hospital. Members of the public were asked their views in St Helens town centre and at community events, and 105 patients, visitors and staff gave their views at Whiston Hospital and in the local community. It was evident that despite some concerns, perceptions about hygiene had improved, partly because of the new Whiston Hospital building. LINK recommended that more should be done to highlight recent successes in this area.

- **Staff Attitudes.**

Research on staff attitudes was carried out amongst GP practice staff and Practice Managers as a result of concerns raised with LINK about poor staff attitudes. Several practices were visited and evidence was collected through the postcard campaign. The interim report highlighted the frustrations of members of the public trying to make appointments but also of staff in dealing with aggressive patients and various reporting requirements. Mutual respect, staff training and the role of patient groups were recommendations in taking this work forward.

- **Alcohol Survey.**

This survey gathered 50 responses on the public's views on alcohol use. These responses fed into a redesign of the services provided to people affected by drug and alcohol misuse in St Helens.

"I think you have captured views and reported them honestly and fairly...we need to show now that as a result of feedback something positive has come out of it."

Patient and Public Involvement, NHS Halton and St Helens



This freepost postcard asked for people's experiences within our priority issues.

St Helens LINK works in partnership

St Helens LINK is independent from organisations which commission and deliver health and social care services, yet strives to build constructive working relationships with them.

These are specific examples of partnership working during the year:

- LINK involvement in many NHS Halton and St Helens initiatives including Patient and Public Involvement, Medicines Management Board, Lay Readers, Bright Ideas Fund and the Primary Care Trust Programme Boards for Alcohol, Planned Care, Early Detection (ED) of Depression and ED of Major Illness.
- Developing links with GP Commissioners particularly through the work undertaken by the Attitudes of Staff Task Group and the tender panel for Ophthalmology. These links will become even more important in the future as GP commissioning becomes central to the coalition Government's NHS reforms.
- LINK input into 5 Boroughs Partnership's Patient and Public Involvement meetings which has led to several improvements, including the production of a standardised patient discharge pack.
- Working alongside Halton LINK, Age Concern Mid-Mersey and the Alzheimer's Society to deliver several listening events to gather information on people's experiences of being affected by dementia.
- The Transport Task Group is working closely with Merseytravel, Arriva and St Helens Council's Transport Planning Department to address concerns which had been raised within the group around bus shelters and access for people with mobility problems.

What we have done: Working in Partnership

Alongside Halton and Knowsley LINKs, St Helens LINK attends monthly meetings of the Patient Safety and Experience Council, a board of strategic and operational staff and stakeholders of St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. The Council aims to improve the quality of services and learn from complaints. The three LINKs have worked together to gather patient experience to share with the Council and ensure that its priorities for improvement are being closely monitored.

"We have continued to develop a robust and respectful relationship between the Trust and LINK [in which] they represent the views of St Helens residents in discussions around services."

**Assistant Director
Inclusion and
Partnerships,
5 Boroughs
Partnership NHS
Foundation Trust**



Promoting dignity in care.

St Helens LINK makes your views known

It is not enough to collect people's views; improvements to services will only happen if LINK actively creates a dialogue between members of the public and service providers and makes recommendations for change. LINK's workplan priority issues during this year were Attitudes of Staff, Hygiene, Access to Information, Transport and Dignity. LINK co-ordinated Task Groups for each of these issues which brought together members of the public and service providers in the public, private and voluntary sector to discuss and address issues of concern.

Specific examples of how LINK helped to make your views known are:

- **Making requests** for information from commissioners and service providers as a result of concerns raised with LINK.
- **Compiling reports** with recommendations from the Access to Information and Hygiene Task Groups and an interim report from the Attitudes of Staff group to send to service commissioners/providers. These recommendations have led to specific service reviews or changes or are the basis of LINK's ongoing monitoring and partnership work.
- **Dementia.**
As a result of Halton and St Helens LINKs' listening events, the two LINKs have been commissioned by NHS Halton and St Helens to carry out further consultation with people affected by dementia. LINK's initial report will help to develop dementia services and a second report will capture feedback from subsequent consultations.

What we have done: Moving Ahead with Transport Issues

High on the priority list for the Transport Task Group was the issue of bus stops in St Helens which did not have seating or shelters. This was of particular concern to older or disabled travellers. After the group reported this to Merseytravel, work was carried out on 4 bus stops. In Rainhill, this has generated positive feedback from over 40 people. LINK has also worked to promote the Number 28 bus, a service which enters the grounds of St Helens hospital for the first time. Previously the walk from the nearest bus stop to the hospital entrance was causing difficulty for people with mobility problems. LINK's contribution to this issue was acknowledged in local media coverage.

"It was most heartening to realise that LINK had initiated improving bus stops, especially in Rainford. Certain bus stops had had problems but LINK appreciated that and worked to improve others. Thank you very much for your help, care and concern."

**Councillor Betty Lowe
MBE, Rainford Ward
Councillor and Patron
of St Helens' Carers**

Local bus stops without seating or shelters was an area tackled by LINK.



St Helens LINK makes your views known

Specific examples of how LINK helped to make your views known:

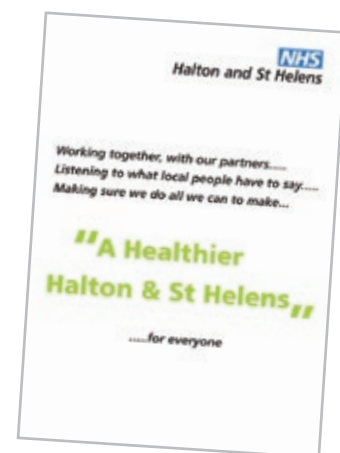
- **Increased service user involvement.**
LINK encouraged the agencies involved in redesigning St Helens' drug and alcohol services to actively seek the views of those affected by substance misuse as there had been limited service user involvement. As a result, a visioning event was held which LINK promoted to local drug and alcohol support groups. This gave people the opportunity to highlight their needs and experiences directly to the commissioners of services. As a result of this consultation, the drug and alcohol service is being redesigned to focus on people's recovery journeys, and the factors behind drug and alcohol misuse.
- **Represented your views.**
LINK Board members are representatives on over twenty Boards, Panels and Advisory Groups and through this far-ranging work on issues including mental health, cancer and aids and adaptations, they have made changes to policy, monitored services and performance and highlighted issues of concern.
- **Dignity.**
Dignity has been one issue which has been highlighted throughout the course of LINK's work, in particular in relation to residential and domiciliary (home) care. LINK held its first meeting of the Dignity in Care Task Group in March 2011. This group will meet to highlight failings, monitor services and share good practice.

What we have done: Improve Patient Information

St Helens LINK is an active member of NHS Halton and St Helens' and St Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust's Lay Readers' Panels. These panels aim to make patient and public information more accessible and user-friendly. As well as giving feedback which has led to changes in the final versions of leaflets, LINK's input has also helped to improve the accessibility of Trust websites, Annual Report and surveys. LINK's Access to Information Task Group recommended that Lay Readers received feedback on their efforts and that more work was done with services to maintain consistent quality in patient information. As a result both Trusts are reviewing their Lay Reader policies and guidelines, the role of Lay Readers is being promoted more widely amongst services and examples of finished work are being provided.

"One of the biggest challenge faced by any organisation is how to effectively communicate with its customers. LINK brings an understanding and awareness to the table and they are able to provide invaluable input into the system. I believe that by working together, we can be more effective than attempting to do our best from an isolated perspective. This surely has to be a model for future working on all issues where we are trying to make a difference to the experience of our customers."

**Head of
Communications, NHS
Halton and St Helens**



NHS Halton and St Helens annual report.

LINK monitors and scrutinises services

LINK aims to drive up standards in the provision of health and social care services by continually monitoring and scrutinising services. As part of this role, LINKs have been granted powers to Enter and View health and social care premises. All LINK's Enter and View representatives are Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked and have been fully trained. Examples of work this year:

- **Mystery Shopping.**

The Attitudes of Staff Task Group carried out 8 visits to GP practices to observe the interaction between patients and staff. Generally, it was felt that these visits provided a positive picture, and feedback was given directly to the practices.

- **Residential Home Visit.**

LINK carried out a visit to Ranelagh Grange Residential Care Home in Rainhill in February 2011 after being invited by the Care Quality Commission to submit information for its own monitoring requirements. The visit focussed on dignity and a report was produced. As a result, Ranelagh Grange is looking to implement some recommendations and will be working with LINK to help put its commitment to dignity into action.

- **Overview and Scrutiny.**

LINK is co-opted onto St Helens Council's Adult Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Its work recently has involved several Enter and View visits to care providers to monitor quality of care. It has also taken part in a scrutiny review of services for people with mental health problems at a time of crisis.

- **Improving Quality.**

The LINK Board has had significant input into CQUIN (Commissioning for Quality and Innovation) target settings for St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, with greater emphasis being given to dignity, nutrition and End of Life care.

"This was a great opportunity for partnership working... being able to work as a team and constructively discuss the results found during the visits. This is a great initial start to what is hoped to be a long and beneficial collaboration, with a clear benefit to the establishments."

**Infection Prevention and Control Nurse,
NHS Halton and
St Helens**

What we have done: Promote good hygiene practice

LINK carried out hygiene audits at 3 randomly selected residential/nursing care homes as part of its work in the Hygiene Task Group. Visits took place with NHS Halton and St Helens' Infection Prevention and Control Nurse to Seddon Court, Elizabeth Court and Alexandra Care Home. Using a hygiene checklist, the audits focussed on hand hygiene and personal protection (ie using aprons.) The Task Group's report highlighted good practice and any shortcomings. As a result of its recommendations, several issues have been addressed including promoting the use of alcohol gel by visitors and staff are offered Hepatitis B injections where appropriate. The Infection Control Team has requested LINK's input into future hygiene audit visits.

LINK consults with you

Asking people's views identifies gaps in services, what works and what doesn't and how services could be improved. As well as carrying out specific pieces of research, LINK promotes relevant local and national consultations through its website, postal mailouts, newsletters, e-bulletin and public meetings.

Specific highlights of the work we have done this year:

- **Giving you a say.**

LINK promoted over 40 local and national consultations ranging from Chronic Pain Services to GP Access, from Changes to Disability Living Allowance to a Vision to Adult Social Care.

- **Views on the Web.**

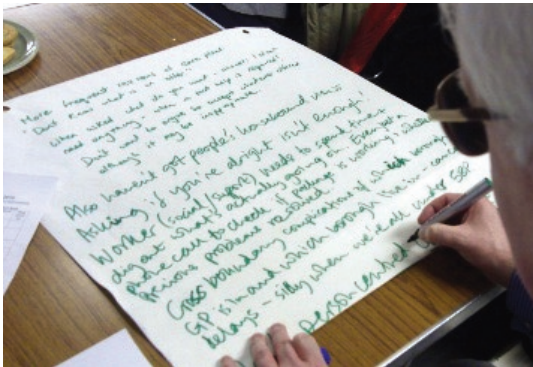
Consultations posted on the LINK website received a total of 1771 hits.

- **NHS reforms.**

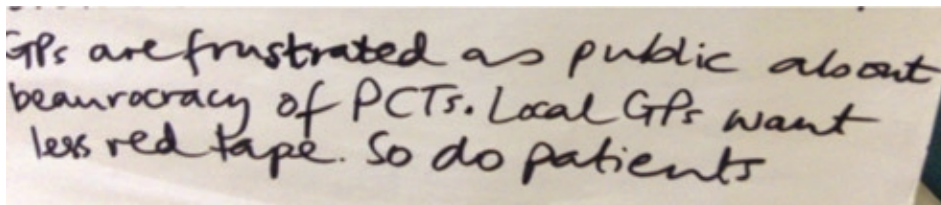
LINK organised 2 public meetings to consult on the government's reforms to the NHS, as proposed in the NHS White Paper 'Equity and Excellence'. The public's responses highlighted a fear of privatisation and GP commissioners being unaccountable.

- **Local Transport Plan.**

As part of its work on transport issues, LINK helped to gather views on Merseytravel's Local Transport Plan 3. Of these respondents, 55% of respondents had disabilities, 33% of them mobility related. The results will help to develop Merseytravel's transport strategy.



People told us their views about NHS reforms.



Feedback from a LINK consultation event.

Developing LINK policies

Much of LINK's early focus in 2009/10 was to develop policies and procedures to make sure that LINK operates fairly and effectively.

During 2010/11, LINK changed its governance procedures so that elections to the LINK Board would only take place every 3 years. This has helped to achieve continuity and means Board members can develop and use their skills, experience and knowledge to greater effect.

During the year, all Board members attended training courses including Roles and Responsibilities of Representatives, Learning Disability Awareness and Skills for Partnerships.

LINK Looks Ahead

LINK aims to be responsive to new challenges in the year ahead. However, some of its work will be ongoing from this year as it continues to monitor, scrutinise and recommend improvements to services.

Plans for the period 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012 include:

- **Working with GPs.**

Continuing to develop productive working relationships with GP commissioners. This will help in working towards implementing the recommendations of the Attitudes to Staff interim report. LINK is also keen to support the development of Patient Participation Groups in GP practices.

- **Dignity.**

Dignity will be a watchword for LINK in the year ahead. Its Dignity in Care Task Group will help members of the public to check and scrutinise services and service providers to share examples of good practice. Through the Patient Safety and Experience Council, LINK will monitor that the action plan around dignity and nutrition is put into place at Whiston Hospital.

- **Transport.**

Through the Transport Task Group, LINK plans to highlight access issues for passengers with mobility problems, poor driver attitudes and the refurbishment of more bus stops.

- **Enter and View Visits.**

LINK will continue to visit GP surgeries as part of its Attitudes of Staff Task Group and care homes as part of its work on hygiene and dignity.

- **Hygiene.**

LINK members will work alongside other volunteers to scrutinise infection control procedures – an initiative known as 'Bugwatch'. This aims to restore and improve public confidence in infection control at St Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust and local care homes.

- **Ongoing monitoring.**

LINK will be involved in monitoring the development of new Trust policies in relation to Lay Readers and patient information and also monitoring recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Review of people experiencing a mental health crisis.



Dignity in care for people.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

1. The reach of LINKs and the level of people's participation

Between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, 117 new members joined LINK, bringing the total to 268 members.

Number of LINK participants/members on 31/03/2011

		Of which:		
		People with a social care interest	Individual participants	Interest group participants
Level of participation	Total			
Informed participants	252	22	156	96
Occasional participants	43	7	18	25
Active participants	34	9	19	15
TOTAL	329	38	193	136

Within these totals, several groups can be considered as working with people who are hard to reach. Their involvement in LINK activities included discussions about service delivery between people with drug and alcohol problems and the Ambulance Services, feedback on the Crisis Team from people with mental health issues and people affected by dementia taking part in consultations about services.

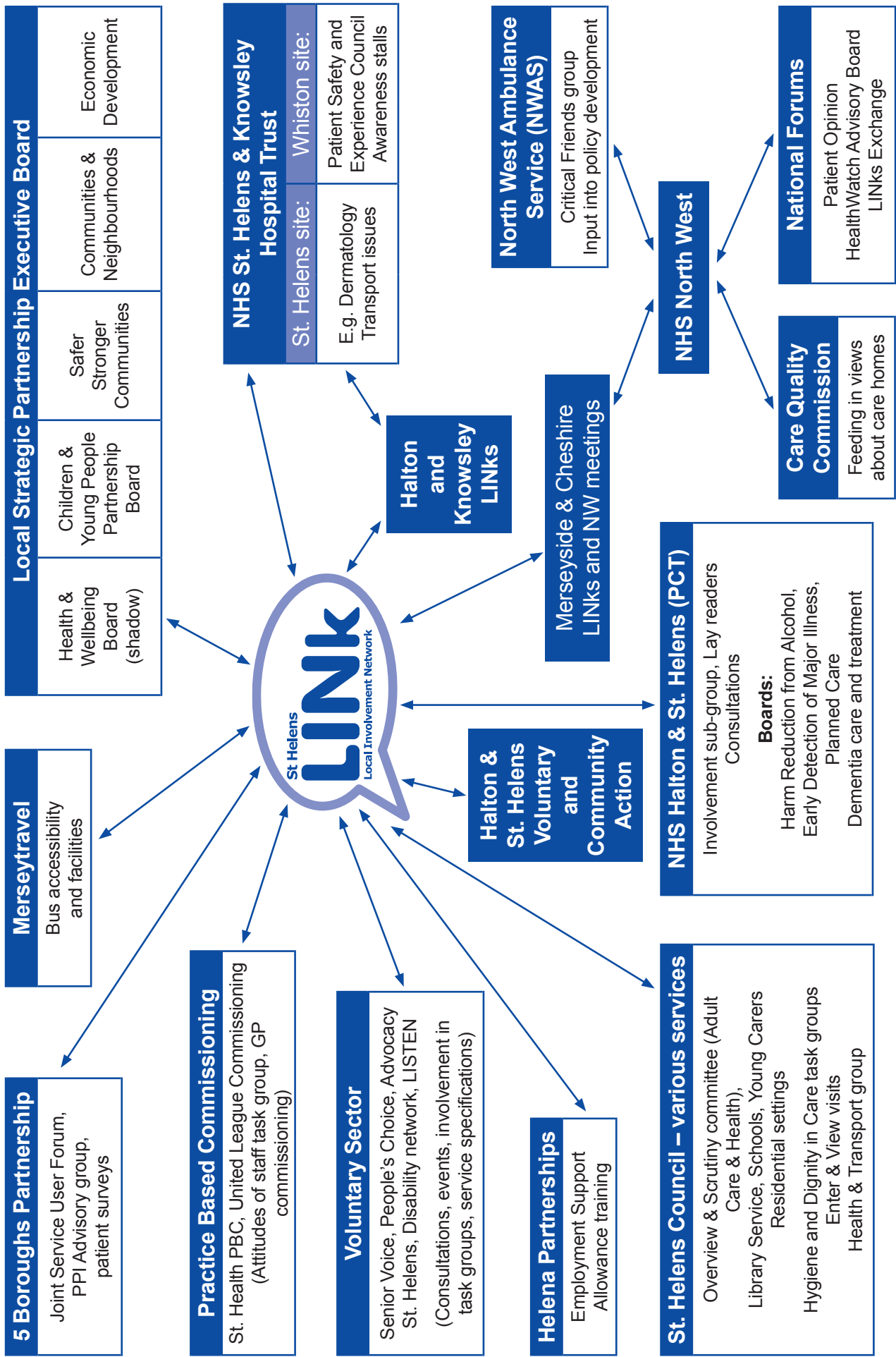
2. Our Finances

Income in 2010-11	
Amount allocated to the local authority by the Department of Health	113,200.00
Amount of funding received by the host from the local authority	114,727.00
Host management fee	-10,000.00
Amount of funding received by the LINK from the host	104,727.00
Expenditure in 2010-11	
Salaries	73,502.70
Staff and volunteers' expenses	2459.98
Staff and volunteers' training	1591.50
Office accommodation, management, finance	13,380.00
Postage and stationery, literature, insurance, audit	6615.99
IT Support	1078.58
Activities	4738.45
Communications	2795.50
TOTAL	106,162.70

There is a £1435.70 overspend this financial year, yet £46,997 underspend brought forward from the previous years of the project due to a late start in October 2008.

3. Summary of Activity

Requests for Information in 2010-11	Total
How many requests for information were made by your LINK?	18
Of these, how many of the requests for information were answered within 20 working days?	17
How many related to social care?	10
Enter and View in 2010-11	
How many enter and view visits did your LINK make?	12
How many enter and view visits related to health care?	11
How many enter and view visits related to social care?	1
How many enter and view visits were announced?	8
How many enter and view visits were unannounced?	4
Reports and Recommendations in 2010-11	
How many reports and/or recommendations were made by your LINK to commissioners of health and adult social care services?	48
How many of these reports and/or recommendations have been acknowledged in the required timescale?	All reports
Of the reports and/or recommendations acknowledged, how many have led, or are leading to service review?	15
Of the reports and/or recommendations that led to service review, how many have led to service change?	3
How many reports/recommendations related to health services?	28
How many reports/recommendations related to social care?	20
Referrals to OSCs in 2010-11	
How many referrals were made by your LINK to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)?	0
How many of these referrals did the OSC acknowledge?	n/a
How many of these referrals led to service change?	n/a



St Helens LINK aims to give people a say in health and adult social care services. By becoming involved, sharing your experiences and making suggestions for change, LINK can work with services to make sure they meet the needs of people.

To get involved, find out more and have your say, contact:

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24 Church Street
St Helens
WA10 1BD

Tel: 01744 457119

Email: sthelenslink@sthelenscvcs.org.uk

www.linksthelens.org.uk

