



PROTOCOL ON WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Although the LINK Strategy defines the various parts of our organisation and their roles no detailed consideration has been given as to what should comprise the basic Working Arrangements and Communications policy of the LINK. Who is authorised to speak on behalf of the LINK and how are communications to be monitored and recorded?

There are a wide range of issues here and some conflicting demands:

- How do we balance the need for the LINK to be professional and structured with the need for Action Groups to be free to take initiative and pursue their individual objectives?
- How do we ensure that the Birmingham LINK retains a firm central identity and structure without stifling the Group's own agendas and pursuit of their Workplans?

These are complicated issues and it is highly improbable that we will be able to get them right at once. This proposal should therefore be seen as an initial working document which can be amended in the light of experience. If the document errs on the side of caution and centralisation that is because at this stage in the evolution of the LINK the need to act professionally and thereby gain respect is an overwhelming one.

AUTHORISATION TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE LINK OR SOME PART OF IT

1) The Media: Communications with the media do need to be strictly controlled and the only people who should be authorised in the first instance to speak to the media are the Programme Lead, the Chair and Vice-Chairs; however if it is the opinion of any of these people that someone else is more appropriate they may delegate this responsibility to any Core Group member or Facilitator.

2) Outside organisations and individuals: This clearly falls into a number of categories:

a) General issues, correspondence, requests etc. not falling under the purview of any particular Action Group. In the first instance communication on these issues should be referred to or through the Programme Lead, Chair and Vice-Chairs who again if appropriate may delegate the responsibility to any Core Group member or Facilitator. In the case of Health and Social Care issues, these fall (under the Strategy) to CLOG and it would be therefore appropriate for any member of that Group to deal with an appropriate issue.

b) Issues specific to an Action Group. The normal course of working will be through Workplans where a Group will agree who has authorisation to speak on its behalf on a specific issue (see Working Arrangements below). In the case of issues which crop up in between meetings the relevant CLO and Facilitator are authorised to speak on behalf of the specific Action Group.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

In order that professional standards are maintained, good records kept and the LINKs image is enhanced it is important that correspondence and communication to outside organisations should be directed through the LINK itself. This can clearly not be a hard and fast rule and there will be cases in which individual contacts can be of great value and may be usefully pursued on a less formal level. However as a basic standard communication with outside organisations should be sent (either electronically or in paper form) via the LINK itself and all communications on behalf of an Action Group should go through a relevant member of CLOG (CLO or Facilitator).

When an Action Group requests that an individual member or members undertake work on its behalf it should be clear about the exact nature, scope and parameters of the work involved (writing a report, attending a meeting, writing a mail etc.) and the way in which such work will be conducted.

All communication with outside organisations should always be reported back to the relevant Group.

STRATEGY REMINDER

This document is an elaboration of points already agreed as part of the Code of Conduct which in turn forms part of the Strategy:

- Only undertake work and carry out visits in line with the action plan and protocols agreed by the Birmingham LINK and only when I have taken part in and passed the necessary training.
- Have the general agreement of the Birmingham LINK before speaking, writing or attending meetings on behalf of the LINK.
- Ensure that when I am representing the Birmingham LINK at a meeting or event, that I am speaking on behalf of the group and not myself.
- Feedback to other members of the Birmingham LINK when I attend anything on the LINKs behalf. A 'meeting report' feedback form to be completed within two weeks of attending the activity.