

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair and a pink bow, smiling warmly as she looks down at a baby. The baby, also with a pink bow, is looking intently at a tablet held in front of them. The background is a soft, out-of-focus orange wall.

**Help shape  
your local health  
and social care**

**Your guide to  
Local Involvement  
Networks (LINKs)**

**LINK**  
**MAKE IT  
HAPPEN!**

# What is a LINK?

**As a member of the public, you have a right to be involved in discussions and decisions about your health and social care services. By sharing your experiences and ideas with your Local Involvement Network (LINK), you can influence the way services are run.**

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) are made up of individuals and community groups, such as faith groups and residents' associations, working together to improve health and social care services.

The job of each LINK is to find out what people like and dislike about local services. The LINK then feeds this information back to health and social care providers, helping them to plan and deliver better services that reflect the wishes of local people.

The more people that get involved in your LINK, the stronger and more influential it becomes.



# **LINKs and the law:** your rights in action

## **Becoming part of a LINK gives you an opportunity to put your rights into action.**

The NHS Constitution sets out the rights and responsibilities of patients, the public and staff in relation to NHS care. It makes clear what you can expect from the NHS, and how you can play a part in making it even better.

By interacting with your LINK you will be able to help:

- Plan health and social care services
- Develop proposals for changes to services
- Make decisions that may affect how the services operate

LINKs also have certain powers and influence within publicly-funded health and social care services. For example, health and social care organisations have to allow LINKs representatives onto their premises to view services. They are also required to respond to suggestions made by LINKs, and outline what action will be taken.

In this way, LINKs can use their power to make sure that your voice is heard, and to help bring about positive changes.

# Why get involved?

**By working with healthcare providers and sharing your views, you can support their work and help improve your own health and social care, and the care provided for the whole community.**

Your LINK is relevant to you and your family. Some reasons why you should get involved include:

- To draw attention to neglected issues or ideas
- To influence those who make decisions about new or existing health and social care services
- To help your community speak with a stronger voice
- To help services provide better care

There are different ways to participate and communicate your thoughts, but if you want to ensure that local services meet your need and the needs of their community, you can and should get involved.

# Who can join?

**Anyone can join a LINK. Everyone is welcome, and everyone's opinions matter.**

LINKs are also open to groups such as charities, faith groups, residents' associations, user-led organisations, youth councils, black and minority ethnic organisations and business federations.

And getting involved in your LINK is easy. You can either use the service directory on [www.nhs.uk/links](http://www.nhs.uk/links) or contact the department of your local council that is responsible for social services to find out what's happening in your area.

It's up to you how and when you interact with your LINK. For example, you could:

- take a few minutes to answer a survey,
- attend an occasional meeting on an issue that interests you,
- get involved in an online group, or
- become an authorised representative who visits services to see how they are run.

Whichever route you decide to pursue, remember: your LINK wants to hear about your experiences of health and social care services and your ideas for improvements for changes.

# Further information

For more information about LINks and how you can get involved, go to [www.nhs.uk/links](http://www.nhs.uk/links).



**Our LINK is more than just a talking shop. It has real powers to help make change happen and influence health and social care services for the benefit of the people of Norfolk. It gives them a real voice in the commissioning and development of services while working in partnership with local health and social care providers.**

**Tina Walton, Norfolk LINK**

