



Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

Mental Health Working Group GP Access Report

June 2011



Middlesbrough LINK is supported by
The Carers Federation,
1 Beech Avenue,
Sherwood Rise,
Nottingham,
NG7 7LJ.

Registered charity number 1050779

Contents

Summary	4
Purpose of Report	4
Remit of Group	5
Membership of Group	5
Action Plan	5
National Picture	6
Middlesbrough Picture	7
Discussion by Mental Health Working Group	8
Views of GP Service Users	10
Questionnaire Results	11
Conclusion	14
Recommendations	14
Appendix A – working group membership	16
Appendix B – survey	17
Appendix C – survey results	19
Appendix D – books on prescription	23
Contact Details	24

The role of the GP in providing access to treatment for people with mental health issues

Summary

Middlesbrough LINK Mental Health Group discussed a range of issues brought to them by people living in Middlesbrough and decided to gather more evidence about the experiences people with mental health issues had with General Practitioners (GPs). Your family doctor is also known as a GP. Patients consult their GP at a GP surgery.

We carried out a survey at Stamp out Stigma, an event promoting positive attitudes to mental health and making information about mental health available to the general public.

We found that most people we talked to had experience of mental health issues themselves or through a friend or family member and that they had accessed their GP for help. Although most people were happy with the service provided by their GP a significant minority were dissatisfied.

People who considered that their GP discussed their needs and treatment with them were most likely to be satisfied with their treatment. Talking was perceived to be helpful and, to a lesser extent, so was medication.

Middlesbrough LINK recommends that:

- Talking therapies continue to be considered a priority by commissioners
- There is a suitable level of mental health knowledge and expertise within each GP practice so that the needs of individuals are met.
- The assessment process is simplified so that referral to primary and secondary mental health care is achieved more efficiently.

Purpose of Report

The Mental Health Working Group looks at people's experience of local mental health services. One of the issues which it was felt could usefully be addressed

by the group was that of GP services and their role in providing access to treatment for people with mental health issues. Members of the group were aware of instances where people had experienced quality of care that did not meet their expectations. The purpose of this report is to identify whether these instances were isolated cases or whether they were representative of a more widespread problem.

Remit of Group

The group set out three objectives:

- To further our understanding of how many people in Middlesbrough have experience of mental health issues
- To understand levels of satisfaction with GPs services for people with mental health issues
- To help combat stigma by raising mental health issues in a public arena

Membership of Group

The members of the LINK Mental Health Working Group are all people who have experience of mental health issues, whether as professionals or service users. The group met for the first time in March 2010. A total of 21 people are involved in the group. See appendix A for members of the group.

Action Plan

The working group set out the following plan of action:

- To understand the national and local context by looking at official figures, reports and directives
- To gain a deeper understanding of the issues encountered by members of the group and any implications these might have for the wider population

- To ask the people of Middlesbrough about their experiences in a way that was sensitive but also helped raise awareness

National picture

1 in 4 British adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any one year and 1 person in 6 is experiencing this at any given time (The Office for National Statistics Psychiatric Morbidity report 2001).

Up to 91 per cent of people with a mental health problem will be treated entirely within primary care (The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2007, Tools for common mental health problems). In other words, less than 10 per cent of cases are referred to specialist mental health services.

An estimated third of all GP consultations are the result of mental health issues, although this may not always be recognised as such (The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2006, The Future of Mental Health: a Vision for 2015). It has been suggested that there are two key reasons for this; the first is that at least 25 per cent of people with symptoms of disorders such as depression and anxiety do not report this to a GP and the second is that of those who do consult a GP, up to 50 per cent might present with only physical symptoms rather than depression.

Another reason why depression and other mental disorders are not recognised might be lack of training in mental health for GPs and other health professionals. One survey found that only one-third of doctors had received training in mental health in the past five years. Ten per cent said they were concerned about their training and skills needs in mental health (Shared care for people with mental illness: a GP's perspective 2005).

Mental health issues can take time to diagnose but GPs are restricted in the amount of time available for consultations during routine surgeries. It is possible to book two consecutive appointments, however not many people are aware of this.

Most GPs see their role in caring for seriously mentally ill people as being restricted to the physical aspects of care and the prescribing of drugs. There is evidence that some GPs have a negative perception of people with serious

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

mental health problems (Shared care for people with mental illness: a GP's perspective 2005).

About half of people with common mental health problems are no longer affected after 18 months, but poorer people, the long-term sick and unemployed people are more likely to be still affected than the general population (Better Or Worse: A Longitudinal Study Of The Mental Health Of Adults In Great Britain, National Statistics 2003).

Middlesbrough picture

There are 25 GP practices in Middlesbrough (Middlesbrough PCT 2011) serving a population of 153,000 people in one of the most economically deprived areas of Britain. There is a recognised link between deprivation and the prevalence of mental health problems. This would suggest that Middlesbrough has a higher than average incidence of people with mental health issues.

According to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Middlesbrough the number of people on incapacity benefit as a result of mental illness is much higher than the national average. Figures also show that of all dementia sufferers in Teesside 41% are diagnosed and therefore receive the help that is available (Alzheimer's Society 2011).

The JSNA, jointly developed by the local authority and NHS, considers mental health as a priority area for improvement including the 'need to ensure the care and treatment services required by people with a mental health problem meet their individual needs across primary, secondary and community providers'. There is also recognition of the need to improve dementia services to encourage early detection and intervention to promote recovery.

In 2009 Tees: Time to Talk was introduced. This is a service aimed at Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) for those with mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Ease of access to the service is important and referrals can be made by GPs, other clinicians and also by patients themselves.

Discussion by Mental Health Working Group

Membership of the LINK Mental Health Working Group includes people with experience of mental health from service user, carer, volunteer and professional perspectives. The group talked about issues that people had told them they had encountered with GP services. Of these the most common concerns were:

- Appointments need to be longer. 8 minutes is not enough time to discuss mental health issues and for a GP to reach a diagnosis and prescribe, signpost or refer a patient.
- It can be difficult to get an appointment with a GP.
- Patients report difficulty getting repeat prescriptions without an appointment.
- There are concerns that GPs still prescribe medication rather than talking therapies as recommended by NICE guidance.
- Many GPs lack specialist knowledge of mental health issues resulting in delays in treatment.
- Patients are treated for mental health problems when their symptoms are the result of a physical health problem and vice versa.
- There are cases where patients have had the wrong treatment because they have been misdiagnosed.
- Screening tools are available online in the GP surgery and should be used by GPs. Perhaps appointments are too short to use them?
- Many GPs need to increase their knowledge of holistic services available to patients with mental health issues e.g. secondary services like Early Intervention in Psychosis and primary services such as IAPT, Get Active on Prescription, access to financial advice etc.

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

- Using a social model of care would be beneficial. Mental health recovery requires treating the whole person; helping them with family, housing, money, work, aspirations etc.
- The patient often needs to be an expert on their own condition to know what services are available and how to ask for them.
- Patients would benefit from advocacy support to get the right service.
- GPs can lack empathy and understanding e.g. not looking patient in the face after the initial greeting.
- Mainstream clinicians can see patients as a label (their condition) rather than as a person.
- Support is required for carers through GP practices.
- Communication between GPs and secondary care providers needs to be improved.
- Patients who have had negative experiences with their GP may be unwilling to make an appointment. Promotion of the NHS Walk-in Centres may help patients to access a GP in confidence. These offer access to a range of treatments and anyone can walk in and see a doctor anywhere in the country (Middlesbrough's nearest is in North Ormesby, 03301 239501).
- There is variation of quality of services provided between GP practices. Some practices have GPs with a specialist interest in mental health. Some patients receive an excellent service from their GP and others at a practice nearby do not.
- BME (Black Minority Ethnic) women have concerns about talking to GPs from their own community because of worries about confidentiality.
- It can be difficult for patients who need a translator to access services. Using family or friends can be problematic.

Views of GP Service Users

The LINK working group designed a survey to be used at an event taking place in Middlesbrough town centre. The survey was designed to be short and easily completed. The questions asked were:

1. Have you or someone close to you had a mental health issue? (This could be anything from stress to a serious mental health problem).
2. Have you or someone close to you been to see your GP about mental health issues?
3. Were you or the person close to you happy with the service your GP gave you?

There was also space provided for people to give a brief description of why they were happy or unhappy with the service they received, if they wished to do so. See Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire.

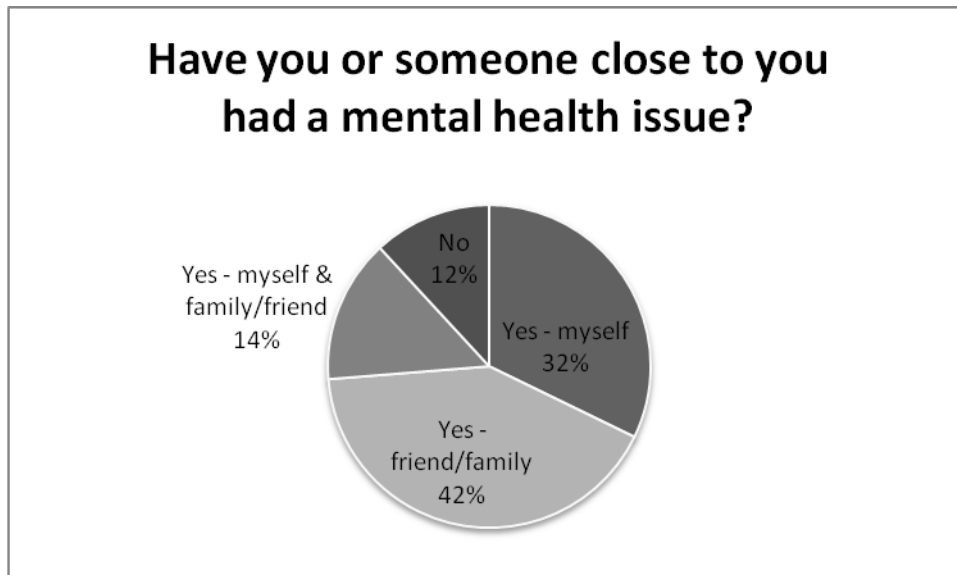
The Stamp out Stigma event took place on 2nd September 2010 and was coordinated by Middlesbrough Hearts & Minds to promote social inclusion for people with mental health issues. Other organisations with an interest in mental health issues also took part in the event.

The event featured a number of stalls and activities and took place over the course of a day in a busy shopping area visited by many members of the general public. People who stopped to look around the stalls were encouraged to complete the survey. The majority of people completed the survey there and then, although there was also the option to take the survey home and submit it by Freepost before 14th September 2010.

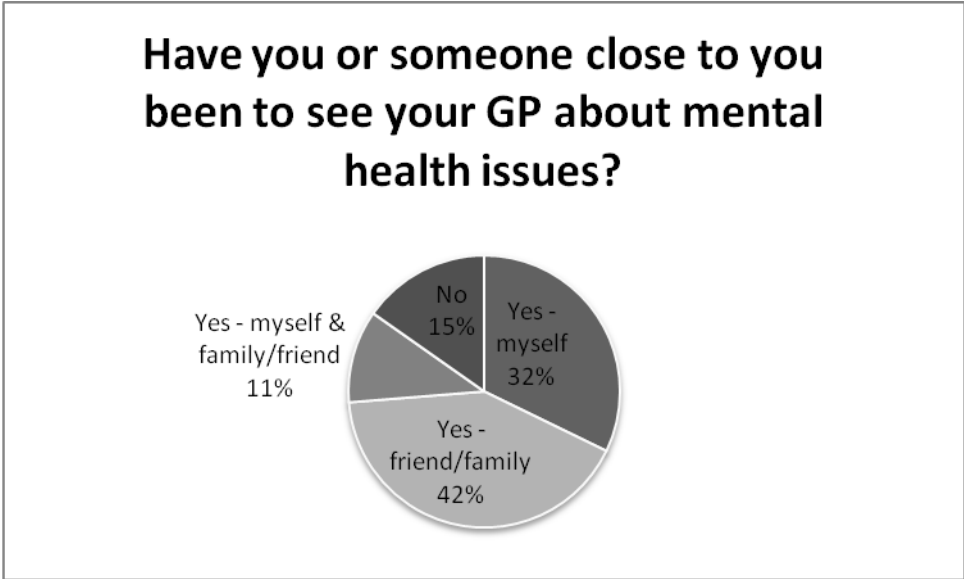
Questionnaire Results

118 questionnaires were completed. 88% of respondents said that they or a family member or friend had experienced mental health issues. This remarkably high number is likely to have been because of the nature of the event the survey was held during.

12% had never experienced a mental health issue nor had anyone close to them. 46% had experienced mental health issues themselves and 56% said that a family member or friend had. 14% of people who had experienced mental health issues also had a family member or friend who had experienced mental health issues.



85% of people reported that they or a family member or friend had visited their GP about a mental health issue while 15% had not. 43% of people had been to see their GP about their mental health and 53% had a family member or friend who had. 11% of people who had visited their GP about mental health issues also had a family member or friend who had visited their GP.



53% of people surveyed indicated that they were happy with GP services related to their mental health issues. 14% of people had not seen their GP about a mental health issue. 6% of people who had either had mental health issues or had a friend or family member with mental health issues did not state whether or not they were happy with the service they had received. 14% reported that they were unhappy with the service they received from their GP. 16% said that their family member or friend was unhappy. 27% of those surveyed indicated unhappiness with GP services for those with mental health issues.



Why were you happy or unhappy with the service your GP gave you?

53 people of 118 (45%) did not make any additional comment about services they or a family member or friend received from their GP as a person with mental health issues.

Of the 65 (55%) who commented the following themes arose:

People were happy with GP services when they felt that they were listened to and the GP showed empathy. However, when people were unhappy with the service they received from their GP they felt that the GP did not listen to them and was not supportive.

People felt that referral procedures could be improved; GPs needed more information about mental health issues, local services for people with mental health issues and to refer to talking treatments instead of prescribing medication.

Dissatisfaction with the prescription of medication was often a reason for people being unhappy with GP services. Some people, however, were happy that they had been prescribed medication which they believed had helped them. Those who had been referred to talking therapy or counselling were also happy.

People were more satisfied with GP services when they had longer appointments and spent less time waiting. People described long waiting lists for referrals (e.g. to a counsellor) but were still happy with their GP service if they felt they had been listened to and understood by their GP.

See Appendix C for a complete list of responses.

Conclusion

While there is a good level of satisfaction with GP services for people with mental health issues in Middlesbrough improvements can still be made.

There is a high level of awareness that the GP is someone who can help people with mental health problems and that the GP can prescribe medication and refer to other services.

When a GP listens and the patient feels understood they feel more positive about the treatment they receive. This improves the patient's confidence in their GP and may help their recovery. As a result the patient might then be more likely to encourage others to visit their own GP about similar problems.

Recommendations

This working group recommends the following steps be taken to ensure the people of Middlesbrough receive evidence based care for their mental health and related physical needs:

- Each GP practice should have based within it a specialist practitioner who understands the needs of people with mental health issues. This could be a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) or a GP with a specialist interest in mental health for example.
- The assessment process for mental health needs is simplified so that there is a single access point for primary and secondary mental health services allowing needs to be met quickly and efficiently.
- Patients are signposted to services that complement or are an alternative to medication, such as Time to Talk, which is the service in Middlesbrough for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT),

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

books on prescription (Appendix D), exercise on prescription and other wellbeing related services.

- Translation services and advocacy should be available when required.
- There is ongoing commitment at a commissioning and practice level to providing excellent services to people with mental health issues including improving the physical health of people with mental health.

APPENDIX A

Middlesbrough LINK Working Group members:-

Agma Malakar	Individual
Catherine Haigh	Middlesbrough LINK Chair
Cheri Chen	Middlesbrough/Stockton MIND
Dawn Downey	Middlesbrough/Stockton MIND
Elaine Dulrose	Individual
Frances Foggin	Individual
Heather Murray,	New Ideas
Julia Paige Gibson.	New Horizons
John Macdonld	Individual
Joanna Bailey	Middlesbrough LINK Host
Kay Duffie	Families First
Lol Butterfield	Middlesbrough Council
Nathalie Carter	Middlesbrough/Stockton MIND
Nilam Kaur	Milan Group
Nick McCreton	Personal Support Network
Rebecca Willoughby	Middlesbrough Libraries
Richard Bradshaw	TEWV Chaplain
Rukhsana Rauf	Middlesbrough LINK Host
Selina Munsha	Middlesbrough/Stockton MIND
Tracey Macpherson	Personal Support Network
Tracey Yates	Mental Health Matters
William Meli	Humanah CIC

APPENDIX B

Survey

Why were you happy or unhappy with the service from your GP?

.....
.....

For more information about Middlesbrough LINK, Hearts & Minds or this piece of work please fill in your contact details below

Your name

.....

Your address

.....
.....

Telephone

Mobile No.

Email:

Please return your completed form to
FREEPOST, Middlesbrough LINK



Thursday 2nd September 2010



Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)



1 in 4 people experience mental health issues at some point in their life. This means that of the 142,777 people in Middlesbrough 35,676 will either experience mental health problems themselves or know someone who does.

Hearts & Minds believe in people being treated fairly and with respect. We care passionately about people in Middlesbrough being free to live their lives without stigma or discrimination.

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK) is a network of local people, organisations and groups who want to strengthen the quality of local health and social care.

let your voice be heard

If you'd like your voice to be heard, get in touch and get involved.

Write to us at:

FREEPOST
Middlesbrough LINK

Call us on:
Freephone: 0800 141 2642
Textphone: 0752 523 7741

Middlesbrough LINK
302/3 Vanguard Suite
Broadcasting House, Newport Road
Middlesbrough, TS1 5JA
Email: enquiries@middlesbroughlink.org.uk
www.middlesbroughlink.org.uk



If you would like to take this survey away with you to complete please return it by 14th September 2010
FREEPOST, Middlesbrough LINK



Have you or someone close to you had a mental health issue? (This could be anything from stress to a serious mental health problem.)

Yes (myself)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (a friend or family member)	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Have you or someone close to you been to see your GP about mental health issues?

Yes (myself)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (a friend or family member)	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Were you or the person close to you happy with the service your GP gave you?

Yes (myself)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (a friend or family member)	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Why were you happy or unhappy with the service from your GP?

Please continue over the page



APPENDIX C

Stamp Out Stigma Questionnaire

Have you ever experienced mental health issues?

Yes (myself) 32%

Yes (a family member or friend) 42%

Yes (both myself and a family member or friend) 14%

No 12%

Have you or has someone you know visited a GP about mental health issues?

Yes (myself) 32%

Yes (a family member or friend) 42%

Yes (both myself and a family member or friend) 11%

No 15%

Were you happy with the treatment you received from your GP?

Yes (myself) 26%

Yes (a family member or friend) 27%

Yes (both myself and a family member or friend) 3%

No (myself) 11%

No (a family member or friend) 13%

No (both myself and a family member or friend) 3%

Not applicable 14%

No answer 6%

Why Were You Happy or Unhappy with the service from your GP?

Negative Feedback

- Never available and not understanding.
- GP's do not always appreciate or understand eating disorders
- Rubbish medication.
- Lack of understanding of mental health issues.
- Had to go elsewhere for support.
- It was a long time ago – attitudes have changed.
- GP needed understanding.

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

- I suffered post natal depression and was given tablets. My husband was depressed (is depressed) and was told to go to RELATE! We were not the problem, work stress and other matters were the problem. He just wanted to talk to someone. Depression is still a stigma. My brother-in-law has the same worries.
- GP didn't have the required time for counselling. Medication (anti depressants) were prescribed.
- My friend couldn't get referred to the treatment she wanted (CBT)
- Pills!
- Offered medication. Wanted more options.
- It took 4 suicide attempts before my family member got help.
- Two of my cousins have schizophrenia. One felt the GP didn't help as he just gave medication. The other committed suicide.
- No follow up.
- I found the GP's over eager to handout medication. Don't really take the time to listen.
- There seemed to be no confidentiality as her information was used against her when she was in court.
- Lack of understanding.
- Seem to just give medication and don't tackle underlying issues.
- Not able to help until the person who was suffering with mental health problems initially went to the surgery.
- Never the same doctor. Don't stay in the same place for long. Room for improvement to make sure that the best care and support continues.
- Didn't seem to understand or just another person with depression.
- Doctor lacked empathy and understanding of how to approach mental health patient. Friend had to ask the doctor to refer her to services she had found out about.
- Didn't appear to give much support and diagnosis still not made.
- No! My GP was not helpful at all.

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

- Family member has suffered mental health issues most of her life (now 72). Not given much support for her or her family (not this area). Better now than it used to be but counselling still takes a long time.
- No follow up. 10 minutes is not enough.
- My GP didn't listen to me and she doesn't seem to care about how I felt.
- Did not understand concept of mental health problem.
- I waited for an hour. It was a second visit and no medical help!
- Doctor sent me to St. Lukes.
- Some doctors holistically observe and diagnose sociological aberrations in a patient psychosis as its cause. I consider this rash.

Neutral Feedback

- Was tested and checked. Medication OK.
- Offered support but needed more time. Gave advice on services.
- In those days 70's & 80's the only thing a GP did was prescribe medication. That was never enough. Therapy, meaningful occupation, sport, diet, there was nothing like that.
- Unsure.
- Don't know. Is ongoing.
- When mental health creeps in i.e. Siblings, there should not be confidentiality i.e. carer, mother should be kept in touch.

Positive Feedback

- Paid close attention to us. Follow up and personal contact good.
- GP has been very supportive in referring me to other services.
- Doctor referred me to specialist.
- GP service was very good.
- GP gave me depression tablets when I lost my children.
- Time given to listen and consider issues (Hartlepool GP).
- My GP listened to me.
- Services were offered.
- I was treated with consideration and made to feel they cared.

Middlesbrough Local Involvement Network (LINK)

- Good support and ongoing care.
- My GP listens to me and knows that I know a lot about my own condition and what help I need.
- He comforted me and provided a valid diagnosis and recase to my MHP.
- They were sympathetic and didn't judge.
- Happy at the time.
- Now I have had the help to move my CPN to Lakeside I'm understood and assisted to live life to the fullest.
- Received counselling.
- She was given medication to help her.
- My GP sees me once a month about mental health and talks to me for 20 minutes (but I live in Durham). I am very happy. He listens to me and responds to my needs. He is a key member of my care coordinated team. He also helps and monitors my rheumatoid arthritis.
- Yes both myself and my son have had good experiences with our GP.
- My GP was very helpful.
- Counselling service offered, although there was a waiting list for this (6 weeks).
- They got referred quickly to see a consultant.
- This time I was very happy. They were very understanding referred me to a CPN and I had CBT and I didn't have to wait long. In the past this has not been the case. (Sedgefield GP).
- I was happy to receive the kind of service that saw me overcome my issues with anxiety.
- GP is very accommodating. Helps as much as he can.
- In services – forensic learning disability. Happy with the services I receive.
- Yes although the time wait to see a counsellor was far too long.

APPENDIX D

Read Yourself Well

Inspire. Entertain. Motivate.

"Whether it is life changing, or mood altering, reading can change us. It can shake up the way we think about the world.

At Middlesbrough Libraries we have a range of books to inspire, entertain and motivate you to Read Yourself Well.

Our 'Read Yourself Well' books cover topics such as:

emotional health & happiness

addictions & recovery

stopping smoking

self-help programmes

babies & breastfeeding

support for carers

diet, nutrition & obesity

physical activity.

These and a range of other health and wellbeing books are available in your local Middlesbrough library and many titles have been recommended by health professionals.

Borrowing is free and easy to do-you just need to be a member of the library.

For further information, please contact:

Rebecca Willoughby, Health & Wellbeing Librarian 01642 249209"

Contact Details

Middlesbrough LINK

302/3 Vanguard Suite
Broadcasting House
Newport Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 5JA

Tel: 01642 230434
Mobile: 07525237740
Free Phone 0800 141 2642

FREEPOST
MIDDLESBROUGH LINK

www.middlesbroughlink.org.uk

Middlesbrough LINK is also on Facebook and Twitter
www.facebook.com search for Middlesbrough LINK
www.twitter.com/borolink

