

Delivering effective local Healthwatch

Key success features



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Delivering effective local Healthwatch

Background

Within the context of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 ('the Act') a number of key players have come together to provide effective leadership and support for the successful implementation of local Healthwatch as a consumer champion.

The key players are:

- council commissioners – who are responsible for providing local leadership, managing the contracts with their local Healthwatch and ensuring effective delivery in line with the legislation – represented and supported by the Local Government Association
- Healthwatch England¹ – who provide national leadership and support to local Healthwatch
- the Department of Health – who have overall responsibility for this policy area.

The Department of Health, Healthwatch England and the Local Government Association (LGA) are collaborating in the provision of support to councils to help ensure that arrangements are put in place. This will enable local Healthwatch to perform and deliver to a high standard, and their development is in the context of the wider changes in health and social care system.

This is described in the health and wellbeing system improvement offer².

It is anticipated that a well-performing local Healthwatch, through its consumer champion role, will help drive up the quality of local services; resulting in improved experience and outcomes for people who use services. This document sets out a collective view of what the characteristics of an effective local Healthwatch look like, structured around its statutory responsibilities.

The implementation of the Act at a local level will translate into practical responsibilities for local Healthwatch, against which their effectiveness can be evaluated by council commissioners and local Healthwatch themselves.

In future this will inform arrangements for commissioning and the further development of local Healthwatch.

About this document

Councils, the LGA, local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England are working together to promote sector-led improvement, where the emphasis is placed on local solutions and peer support (eg in sharing best practice).

¹ Healthwatch England was formally established in October 2012.

² http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/health/-/journal_content/56/10171/3932121/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

This document is a refresh of ‘Developing effective local Healthwatch’³. It is hoped that this document will help councils to better understand the commissioning of local Healthwatch and review how well their local Healthwatch delivers its roles and responsibilities. It can also help local Healthwatch develop their understanding of what is expected of them and how they can deliver best practice.

The document seeks to support sector-led improvement⁴ at a council level by helping to shape the outcomes councils want to achieve in their local Healthwatch commissioning role. It is important to emphasise that this document does not cover the commissioning process itself, nor does it comment on organisational models for local Healthwatch.

The word commissioning in this document means working with stakeholders to understand what is needed from local Healthwatch, specifying the requirements, and putting in place arrangements to deliver them. Councils took different approaches to commissioning local Healthwatch, which variously involved tendering processes, or a grant-funded route.

It is anticipated that local Healthwatch can also make use of this document as a tool for self-assessment in order to identify strengths and areas for development. This document can also be used alongside the Outcome & Impact Development Tool that is aimed at assisting councils and Local Healthwatch identify what outcomes and impacts a ‘Good’

local Healthwatch could achieve through the delivery of its functions.

The Local Government Association and Healthwatch England will be guided by localities in the type of support they offer. They are committed to working together, and with local stakeholders, to develop and deliver an effective local consumer organisation. The co-design of the Outcome and Impact Development Tool for local Healthwatch is an example of this joint working.

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is the new independent consumer champion for both health and social care. It exists in two distinct forms – local Healthwatch, at local level, and Healthwatch England, at national level. The aim of local Healthwatch is to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Local Healthwatch provides, or signposts, people to information to help them make choices about health and care services.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 stated that local Healthwatch should have been established from 1 April 2013. Local Healthwatch is an independent organisation, able to employ its own staff and involve volunteers, to become the influential and effective voice of the public.

3 Developing effective local Healthwatch was published as a pre-cursor to the Establishing local Healthwatch series in August 2012: http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=98798d74-b4a1-4af7-9edc-55fa3b6a6c35&groupId=10171

4 Councils taking collective responsibility for improving performance in place of seeking to achieve targets and outcomes set out by central government

Local Healthwatch:

- has a seat on the statutory health and wellbeing boards, ensuring that the views and experiences of patients, carers and other service users are taken into account when local needs assessments and strategies are prepared, such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the re-authorisation of Clinical Commissioning Groups⁵
- enables people to share their views and concerns about their local health and social care services and understands that their contribution will help build a picture of where services are doing well and where they can be improved
- alerts Healthwatch England, or CQC and/or council scrutiny committees where appropriate, to concerns about specific care providers, health or social care matters
- provides people with information about their choices and what to do when things go wrong⁶
- signposts people to information about local health and care services and how to access them
- gives authoritative, evidence-based feedback to organisations responsible for commissioning or delivering local health and social care services
- can help and support Clinical Commissioning Groups and council

⁵ This ensures that local Healthwatch has a role in promoting public health, health improvements and in tackling health inequalities. More information on the authorisation process for CCGs is on the Department of Health website: www.DepartmentofHealth.gov.uk/health/2012/05/authorisation-process-ccg/

⁶ This includes either signposting people to the relevant provider, or itself providing (if commissioned by the council), independent advocacy to individuals who want to complain about NHS services.

social care departments to make sure that services really are designed to meet citizens' needs

- should be inclusive and reflect the diversity of the community it serves⁷.

A full list of the previous LINK functions and the new local Healthwatch functions is at Annex A.

The role of councils

Local Healthwatch are funded by councils and held to account by them for their ability to operate effectively and provide value for money. The Act allowed flexibility for councils to choose the commissioning route to achieve best value for money for their communities.

In addition, the Act set out, that councils should commission and complaints service to people who wish to make a complaint about their experience of the local NHS from April 2013. Councils have the responsibility to commission the complaints service from an appropriate provider. In some localities this has been done through local Healthwatch, and in others it is a separate organisation contracted specifically to provide NHS complaints advocacy services.

The Department of Health encouraged councils to work in partnership with their local communities, e.g. the previous LINK, voluntary groups, and other community organisations, when designing their approach to commissioning local Healthwatch.

⁷ There is an explicit requirement in the Health & Social Care Act 2012 that the way in which local Healthwatch exercises its functions must be representative of local people and different users of services. See Annex A for definition of local people.

Delivering effective local Healthwatch: key success features

1 Vision, values and identity

- Has a clear vision and strategy, which have been developed in partnership with local stakeholders and the wider community. It will have clear priorities, which are based on local evidence.
 - Has a flexible and sustainable organisational model that is capable of learning and adapting to meet further policy changes around the citizen voice in the NHS and social care.
 - Is accessible and has a visible presence in the area it serves, with a recognisable local brand as an independent consumer champion, representing the views of people who use, or may use, health and social care services and members of local communities.
- Exchanges information and views between representatives and the wider community, using a mix of communication methods⁸ to reach the public in the most effective manner.
 - Is proactively engaged in the development and operation of working partnerships and networks, to maximise the complementary relationship with the wider community engagement mechanisms and activities in the local area.
 - Works collaboratively with other local groups and organisations as part of local community networks.
 - Draws upon knowledge and experience that already exists and to maximise its reach across the diversity of the local community, with a particular focus on understanding the views and experiences of seldom heard groups.

2 Local Healthwatch purpose – empowering local people

- Is rooted in the community and gathers the experiences of local people to influence commissioning, provision and scrutiny of health and social services.
- Raises awareness amongst commissioners, providers and other agencies about the importance of engaging with communities.
- Helps community representatives on key health and social care partnerships to understand their role and responsibilities.

3 Local Healthwatch purpose – information gathering from public and consumers

- Gathers the views and experiences of individual service users and triangulates this with other sources of information, making effective use of the Healthwatch England Information Hub.

⁸ Eg by ensuring people can get information in different formats (electronic, hard copy, Braille, preferred language translations etc.) and by making full use of social networking tools to reach communities that might otherwise be under-represented

- Understands what local information sources are available and seeks to identify new information sources in order to develop views about key local and national issues.
- Understands the different techniques for gathering views and chooses the most appropriate method, including enter and view as a source of evidence about the experience of service users and quality of services.
- Has the necessary skills to synthesise, interpret and understand different kinds of data and information. Uses information appropriately to provide the evidence base for any reports and recommendations to commissioners and providers for example Health and Wellbeing Boards and Quality Surveillance Groups.
- Ensures that the information it collects and analyses is easily accessible and available to the public in a variety of formats.
- Provides or signposts people to the information they need helping them to make the right choices for them / their circumstances.
- Provides voluntary and community organisations with the information they need to be able to take an active part in strategic partnerships.
- Evidence and insight gathered by local Healthwatch is fed into Healthwatch England, using the Information Hub, enabling it to advise on the national picture and ensure that local views influence national policy, advice and guidance.

4 Local Healthwatch purpose – engagement and relationships

- Operates independently, authoritatively, and credibly reflecting the voice of local people on what matters most to them.
- Makes the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England to help it carry out its national consumer champion role.
- Develops and maintains good working relationships with strategic partners.
- Plays a full role in strategic decision making as a member of the health and wellbeing board. Is seen as an essential contributor to the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies ensuring that local people's views are integral and inform local decision-making about services.
- Champions the rights of all consumers of health and care services.
- Influences commissioners, providers, regulators and Healthwatch England, using evidence of what matters to local people. Ensures that decisions about commissioning priorities and services reflect the needs and experiences of local people.
- Has arrangements in place to be able to show how it has made a positive impact on local decision-making and service improvements.

5 Governance

- Has an open and transparent structure for making decisions and enabling local people to influence what it does (e.g. internal processes, work prioritisation, recommendations, impact analysis) and acts in accordance with the Nolan principles of standards in public life.
- Has robust governance and management arrangements in place including processes to maintain accounts of how it has used its funds.
- Demonstrates accountability to the local community for the way it takes decisions.

Further information, websites and contacts

A description of the policy on local Healthwatch is available at: <http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/healthwatch-policy/>

Comprehensive guidance on commissioning can be found in the:

National Audit Office's guide to good local commissioning:
www.nao.org.uk/sectors/third_sector/successful_commissioning/toolkit_home/toolkit_home.aspx

National Council for Voluntary Organisations' guide to commissioning and procurement:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/commissioningandprocurement

NAVCA guidance on commissioning with the local voluntary sector:
www.navca.org.uk/funding-grantscommissioning-publications

Local Government Association's 'Building successful Healthwatch organisations':
www.local.gov.healthwatch/

You may also wish to look again at Annex A of the Healthwatch Transition Plan, which contained examples of some statutory organisations, where to get advice on legal form and governance structures, and some funding options:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_126325.pdf

How to contact Healthwatch England

Email: Enquiries.Healthwatch@cqc.org.uk

Telephone: 03000 683 000

Website: www.healthwatch.co.uk/

Healthwatch England

Citygate

Gallowgate

Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA

How to contact Local Government Association

Email: Healthwatch@local.gov.uk

Telephone: 0207 6643277

Website: www.local.gov.uk/health

Local Healthwatch Implementation Programme

Local Government Association

Smith Square

London SW1P 3HZ

How to contact Department of Health

Email: healthwatch@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0207 9724530

Website: www.healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/category/care/healthwatch-2/

Healthwatch Team

LG05 Wellington House

133-155 Waterloo Road

London SE1 8UG

Annex A – What does the Health and Social Care Act 2012 say?

Previous LINK functions that local Healthwatch will carry out (as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Section 221 (2)):

- a) promoting, and supporting, the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services
- b) enabling people to monitor for the purposes of their consideration of matters mentioned in subsection (3), and to review for those purposes, the commissioning and provision of local care services
- c) obtaining the views of people about their needs for, and their experiences of, local care services
- d) making
 - views such as mentioned in paragraph (c) above known
 - reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved to persons responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising local care services.

The matters referred to in subsection (2) (b) are:

- a) the standard of provision of local care services
- b) whether, and how, local care services could be improved

c) whether, and how, local care services ought to be improved.

Additional local Healthwatch functions:

- provide advice and information about access to local care services and about choices that may be made with respect to aspects of those services
- reach views on the standard of provision of local care services, and whether, and how, local care services could or ought to be improved
- make those views known to Healthwatch England
- make recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission about special reviews or investigations to conduct (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, make such recommendations direct to the Care Quality Commission)
- make recommendations to Healthwatch England that it should publish a report on a particular health or social care matter
- give Healthwatch England such assistance as it may require to enable it to carry out its functions effectively, efficiently and economically.

Definition of 'local people':

s.182(8) ...'local people', in relation to a council, means

- a) people who live in the council's area,
- b) people to whom care services are being or may be provided in that area,
- c) people from that area to whom care services are being provided in any place, and who are (taken together) representative of the people mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c);'



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