

## Escalation Policy & Procedure

### 1. Why have an Escalation Policy & Procedure?

The escalation process is a formal process that has been established to allow Healthwatch Kingston (hereafter HWK) to share with Healthwatch England issues about health and social care services that HWK is unable to resolve locally and that it proposes Healthwatch England take forward. A formal process is in place so that Healthwatch England can log and respond to issues escalated from HWK. It also allows Healthwatch England to assess whether an issue is indeed one that is best taken up by Healthwatch England or if it is something that can be better resolved through additional signposting and support to HWK. This policy is a statement of intent and will be implemented as a procedure in accordance with Healthwatch England's guidance.

### 2. What can be done to avoid escalation?

HWK aims to work in partnership with health and social care services and whenever possible to facilitate a culture of collaborative working in the best interests of the local community. During the course of its work, however, there may be times when HWK wishes to voice concerns about a service provider, commissioning decision or unmet need. On these occasions HWK will exhaust all local avenues for resolution before escalating an issue to Healthwatch England. These include:

- Trying to resolve the issue directly with the commissioner and/or service provider, including (if unresolved) escalating the issue to the Chief Executive or other NHS or Local Authority directors
- Identifying a local charity or campaign group who is already focusing on the issue and is better-placed to lead on it because of their knowledge and expertise
- Contacting the Care Quality Commission or the appropriate regulator and seeking their advice and support
- Bringing the issue to the attention of the Health Overview Panel
- Consulting with other local Healthwatch to see if anyone else has already tackled something similar
- Contacting Healthwatch England to find out if the issue is best dealt with at a national level without the need for a formal escalation
- If appropriate, contacting local MPs or local media to leverage action on the issue

### 3. What are the reasons for escalation?

There are two reasons why HWK will escalate an issue to Healthwatch England. They are:

- A local issue that HWK has not been able to resolve at a local level
- A local issue that is irresolvable locally as it relates to national policy and cannot be addressed at a local level

If the issue is related to a safeguarding concern it must be addressed in accordance with HWK's Safeguarding Policy & Procedure.

#### **4. How to escalate an issue?**

HWK can escalate an issue via the web form ([www.healthwatch.co.uk/escalation](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/escalation)) which will require the provision of the following information:

- Date of escalation
- Description of the issue being escalated and the reasons why
- Details of how the issue come to the attention of HWK
- Other organisations involved in the issue
- Related reports or recommendations
- Evidence to show what HWK has done to resolve the issue locally
- Expectations of Healthwatch England

#### **5. What happens next?**

##### **5.1 Reporting and Safeguarding**

After an escalation notification is received by Healthwatch England it is screened for any safeguarding issues. HWK should resolve any safeguarding issues prior to escalating a case but Healthwatch England retains this double-check.

##### **5.2 Screening**

The case is then checked against the escalation criteria. If it does not meet the criteria, HWK will be contacted by the Healthwatch England development team who will provide support to resolve the issue locally. If local action still does not lead to a resolution, the issue can be re-submitted as an escalation.

##### **5.3 Investigation**

Each escalation case will be designated a single point of contact within Healthwatch England. This person will coordinate investigation of the case, remain in contact with HWK and advise on next steps. At this point, the case will be taken up by the intelligence and policy teams within Healthwatch England. The intelligence team will look at how widespread the issue is within the Healthwatch network and will also look at whether there is any other relevant national data on the issue. The policy team will undertake some basic research to understand how the issue could be resolved e.g. what national policy does the issue relate to, who is affected by the issue, which stakeholders are involved, who is involved in funding/commissioning/service provision.

##### **5.4 Actions**

Based on the research and intelligence gathered, a recommendation will be made as to how Healthwatch England can push for the issue to be resolved. Actions could include:

- Using the issue as evidence if it relates to a wider piece of Healthwatch England work
- Informally or formally raising the issue with a statutory body
- Using Healthwatch England's information or advisory powers with a statutory body or Secretary of State
- Carrying out media work to gain traction on the issue
- Carrying out more in-depth investigation on the issue e.g. focus groups with specific consumer groups

- Taking forward the issue in a Healthwatch England special report/inquiry/thematic brief

## 5.5 Timelines

A definitive time line for the escalation process cannot be set out as each escalated case is unique and takes varying amounts of research and action to resolve. HWK should however expect an automated response when the e-form is submitted; an acknowledgment that the escalated issue has been received and is being processed within one week of submission, and an initial response from the lead person who will be investigating the case within two weeks. If there has been a surge in cases, or if there is any other reason why the investigation of HWK's case will be delayed, this should be indicated in the acknowledgement HWK will receive within one week of submission. Once the case has been taken up by a lead person, they will be in regular communication with HWK to update on progress. Any queries during any stage of the process HWK can contact the lead person within Healthwatch England or contact [escalations@healthwatch.co.uk](mailto:escalations@healthwatch.co.uk)

## 6. References

The following publication was used to produce this document:

- Healthwatch England: Escalation Process, 2014

## 7. Document Control

Title of Document: <b>Escalation Policy &amp; Procedure</b>	
Board Approval Date: December 2015	Review Date: December 2016