

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 5 DECEMBER 2013

REPORT OF HEALTHWATCH LEICESTERSHIRE

AN INTRODUCTION TO HEALTHWATCH LEICESTERSHIRE

Purpose of this paper

1. This paper provides an introduction to Healthwatch, its role and functions and also outlines the development of Healthwatch Leicestershire (HWL) as a new service.

Background and definition of Healthwatch

2. Healthwatch is the new consumer champion for both health and social care. The role of Healthwatch is to gather knowledge, information and opinion, influence policy and commissioning decisions, monitor quality and report problems to inspectors and regulators.
3. It aims to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Its creation reflects patients and the public at the heart of health and social care services.
4. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 set out the powers and duties of Healthwatch. It has a national form in Healthwatch England established in 2012 and at a local level; HWL took up its full powers in April 2013. It has been made clear that Healthwatch England will *not* expect to tell local Healthwatch how to run its business nor will it provide detailed guidance on functions but will provide national leadership, support, guidance and advice to the network of 152 local Healthwatch across England.
5. The Department of Health funds Leicestershire County Council to commission HWL and the Local Authority is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the service and ensuring value for money. Voluntary Action Leicestershire has been commissioned to provide Healthwatch services.

Roles, responsibilities and powers of Healthwatch Leicestershire

6. HWL has two seats on the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) for the County and is a full member of the Board. HWL has a responsibility to ensure that the views and experiences of patients, carers and other service users are represented and taken into account when local needs assessments and strategies are prepared.

7. HWL will provide authoritative, evidence-based feedback and challenge to patient and service user groups and organisations responsible for commissioning or delivering local health and social care.
8. HWL has a role to promote public health, health improvements and in tackling health inequalities, it will make sure that health and social care services meet the needs of all Leicestershire residents and take account of equality legislation.
9. There is an explicit requirement in the Health and Social Care Act that the way in which a local Healthwatch exercises its functions must be representative of local people and different users of services, including carers.
10. HWL promotes and supports the involvement of citizens (patients and the public) in the commissioning and provision of local health and care services and where possible that their views influence how services are to be run.
11. HWL will promote patient choice and support the public in making informed choices in the health and social care provision they require, and if gaps are identified, bring them to the attention of commissioners.
12. Through representing the views of communities and their concerns about their local health and social care services, HWL will build a picture of where services are doing well and where they can be improved.
13. HWL is building strong links with other key improvement bodies such as scrutiny committees and if necessary can alert Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission to concerns about specific care providers.
14. HWL signposts people to, information about local health services and how to access them offering choices and what to do when things go wrong; this includes signposting people to the relevant provider. It does **not** deal with individual complaints (nor will it duplicate services provided by PowHer Advocacy who have been commissioned by a cohort of Local Authorities across the East Midlands to fulfil the advocacy requirements set out under the Health and Social Care Act 2012).

Working with the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) provider

15. HWL will work in partnership with the PowHer Advocacy and ensure that information on NHS complaints is fed into intelligence reports to ensure a full understanding of the issues facing the community.

HWL structures, governance and service

16. The transition arrangements include an overarching HW Interim Leadership Group (supported by a wider Reference Group) that is made up of members of the public and service users, voluntary and community sector representatives, who represent the diverse communities for the County.

17. While VAL is responsible for the Healthwatch contract, the HWL Board is the autonomous body that drives and oversees the work ensuring that HWL is accountable to the public and stakeholders. There will be working arrangements between the VAL Trustee Board and HWL Board, to ensure clear lines of responsibility, independence and accountability.
18. The VAL Trustees will employ staff to support the work of Healthwatch, and have responsibility for financial management, insurance and contract compliance.
19. HWL works as a partnership between volunteers and paid staff to fulfil its responsibilities and provide its services. There is a small staff covering its outreach, research, relationships, communications, and signposting and advice responsibilities.
20. HWL membership is drawn from former LINks members, community groups, service users and citizens. The following is a summary of what membership entails:
 - Directly elect the HWL Board
 - Ensures representation, transparency and accountability of Healthwatch via membership conferences, networks, local activity, and campaigning etc.
 - Provides active volunteer membership of Healthwatch work groups and 'high-level' volunteers representing HWL at e.g. CCGs, LPT, UHL, EMAS, and NHS England Local Area Team - Quality Surveillance Group meetings and trained Enter and View volunteers.
 - Includes members and volunteers from those groups we need to reach or who are seldom heard, including young people.
21. HWL has powers to 'Enter and View' all publicly funded adult health and social care services and has recruited Authorised Representatives for this role training. A training programme is underway.
22. HWL is based at the central offices of Voluntary Action LeicesterShire with easy reach to communities. A system of Locality Ambassadors will be developed to ensure a local presence.

Priority setting and focus for 2014 onwards

23. HWL has been engaged in setting its priorities for 2014 onwards using a range of evidence to help set these including;
 - Health and Wellbeing Board priorities
 - Priorities and evidence from public health
 - Issues and concern raised by Healthwatch members, community groups and citizens (patients and the public)
 - Evidence raised by the CQC relating to Leicestershire
 - National issues from Healthwatch England

- Response and recommendations following the Francis, Berwick, Keogh and Clywd-Hart reports.

Alongside the above a series of engagement events in each District area has taken place and HWL is also extending targeting its activities with groups that have not been involved in the priority setting with proactive follow up.

Summary

24. HWL has a key role to play in the new health and social care landscape as the new consumer champion. HWL is committed to representing the views of Leicestershire's communities to help improve health and social care outcomes, both at the planning and delivery stages. HWL is outcome and evidence focused and sees partnerships with statutory, voluntary and community sectors as vital to its success.

25. HWL looks forward to working with the HWB Commissioners, providers, key stakeholders and partners to help improve health and social care and reduce health inequalities in the County.

Officer to contact

Vandna Gohil
Director
Healthwatch Leicestershire