

Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group volunteer

Information about the role and
how to apply

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What is Healthwatch?

We are the health and social care champion for local people. Our mission is to reach out to and listen to people's experience of NHS and social care services to understand what works and what does not. We work for improved services. We also ask questions and hold services to account.

Healthwatch Coventry is one of 151 local Healthwatch around the country. Local Healthwatch were set up under legislation to provide the following functions:

- 1) Gather views and understand the experiences of all who use services, their carers and the wider community
- 2) Make people's views known, including those from excluded or under represented communities
- 3) Promote and enable people to be involved in the commissioning and provision of health and social care services and how they are monitored
- 4) Providing information about health and social care services to individual members of the public
- 5) Provide information to Healthwatch England
- 6) Recommend investigation or special review of provider services via Healthwatch England or Care Quality Commission (CQC)

We must work in a way which:

- Reaches out to those groups and individuals who do not actively engage and enable them to express their aspirations and views.
- Collects and considers diverse opinions and develops a consistent narrative that articulates the most important issues clearly and consistently.
- Takes a strategic view of local NHS, public health and adult social care priorities whilst remaining sensitive to local issues, to ensure that services are appropriate to the particular communities they serve.
- Is credible when representing public, patients', service users' and carers' aspirations and views.

Healthwatch delivery in Coventry

Healthwatch Coventry is delivered by the local charity Voluntary Action Coventry (VAC).

The VAC Board is responsible for contract management, risk management, legal requirements, finances, and ensuring that the delivery organisations meet, fulfil their roles and work effectively together.

The role of the Steering Group

The Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group is an important part of the structure of Healthwatch Coventry. It works as a collective to look across all Healthwatch activity and to set strategy Healthwatch work priorities.

The Steering Group oversees the work of Healthwatch to ensure it is open and accountable; meets good practice and fulfils the role of Healthwatch.

The Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group consists of:

- 9 places for individual local people (volunteers) who bring different perspectives, experience knowledge and skills to help guide the work of Healthwatch Coventry
- 3 places for local voluntary and community groups bringing the expertise of those groups and acting as a conduit with the broader membership or users of their organisations [It is the organisation/group which becomes the member of the Steering Group and the organisation provides a named representative]
- 1 Representative from the voluntary organisation delivering Healthwatch services

Specifically the Steering Group is responsible for:

1. Setting and maintaining the values, culture and ethos of Healthwatch Coventry, knowing the business of Healthwatch Coventry, what it stands for and how it maintains its independence.
2. Determining and setting priorities based on intelligence and evidence
3. Acting as guardian for all elements of Healthwatch activity

4. Holding services and commissioners to account for action plans in response to Healthwatch work and working to ensure that the work delivered is effective and influential.
5. Ensuring the activities of Healthwatch reflect the diverse communities of Coventry
6. Ensuring an open and transparent Healthwatch where actions and decisions can be explained to the public and are regularly communicated
7. Maintaining the reputation of Healthwatch across all its activities and working relationships
8. Giving due regard to guidance produced by Healthwatch England

The decisions the Steering Group can make are set out in the Governance, Involvement and Decision Making policy. (You may want to look at this at: <https://www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk/about-us>)

The Steering Group must make sure that the decisions it takes are reflective of the priorities of the local community and use objective methods to determine work objectives and priorities rather than responding to individual requests.

Time commitment

The Steering Group meets every other month (on a Tuesday morning) and the primary commitment is to attend meetings and read all relevant paper work for these and also take part in reviewing information in between meetings as needed.

Steering Group volunteers will also spend time familiarising themselves with health and social care services and can put themselves forward to be involved in representing Healthwatch at a range of meetings and forums, some regular and some adhoc.

Steering Group members also take part in range of other Healthwatch activities such as the annual meeting and other public meetings.

Individual Steering Group members will hold their position for 3 years, and then can reapply for a further term.

Support

The Steering Group is supported by the Healthwatch staff team led by the Healthwatch Chief Officer. Information and development support is provided along with out of pocket expenses.

Healthwatch provides a volunteer induction course for all Healthwatch volunteers as a grounding in Healthwatch, its work and local health and social care services.

Benefits of involvement

You will be volunteering with others to make sure Healthwatch Coventry carries out its important role of enabling local people to influence how NHS and social care services are delivered and commissioned locally.

Sometimes a small change can make a big difference to people's experiences.

Healthwatch has a unique role as being both independent of health and social care services and connected to key local routes of influence over strategy and service delivery. Local people need their champion to ensure that they are heard.

Eligibility

The following exceptions may apply and any other potential conflicts of interest may be taken into account:

- Current health and social care providers (managers, trustees, employers and current employees) whose main function is to provide services in/to Coventry
- People whose work directly involves them in commissioning health or social care services in/for Coventry, or in commissioning or making strategic policy for other Coventry City Council services.

Applicants are expected to provide honest, full and accurate information and any failure to declare relevant information, or the provision of false information could result in an application being rejected or a place on the Steering Group being withdrawn.

Steering Group volunteer role description

1. To read and consider relevant Steering Group papers and information and use this to contribute to discussions constructively, playing an active part in Steering Group meetings
2. To take a lead role in work related to at least one specific area of NHS or social care services (see application form) learning about that service
3. Looking at consultation documents, service plans and strategies – thinking critically about information received
4. Developing and maintaining an understanding of health and wellbeing issues in Coventry and knowledge of local NHS and social care services
5. Champion the views of local people and good practice in patient and public involvement in the NHS and social care
6. Playing an active part in the Healthwatch role of holding local NHS and social care services and commissioners to account
7. Maintain effective working relationships with other organisations including commissioners, providers as required
8. Represent Healthwatch Coventry at agreed meetings/events
9. Act as an Ambassador for Healthwatch Coventry
10. Uphold the values and ethics of Healthwatch Coventry

Experience and personal qualities

We are looking for the following qualities:

- A strong interest in and passion for citizens/patients being at the centre of improvements in health and social care
- A commitment to develop knowledge of local health and social care services
- Commitment to equality and diversity and involving all Coventry citizens and communities in Healthwatch Coventry work
- Objectivity/impartiality - taking forward issues based on evidence and without personal agenda

- Work co-operatively and constructively with others for the benefit of all those concerned with health and social care across Coventry
- The ability to contribute to group meetings/discussions, listen to others and make collective decisions
- Able to challenge constructively
- Strategic thinking: looking for themes and issues rather than individual concerns; applying good independent judgement to discussions and decisions
- The ability to deal with confidential information sensitively and appropriately
- Openness to learning and development
- Ability to write short reports of meetings attended in order to feedback to the wider group
- Time and commitment to carry out the role and undertake training as necessary

Also helpful

- Understanding of the local NHS and social care services
- Knowledge of Coventry and its people
- IT skills: use of email, Microsoft Word, and Internet