

Decision making policy

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Part one: Decision making in Healthwatch Coventry

The role of Healthwatch

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 created the role of local Healthwatch, setting out seven functions:

- 1) Gathering views and understanding 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) Promoting and enabling people to be involved in the commissioning and provision of health and social care services and how they are monitored
- 4) Recommending investigation or special review of provider services via Healthwatch England or Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- 5) Providing information to the public about access to local care services so choices can be made about these local care services;
- 6) Providing a link to the local NHS Complaints Advocacy service to support individuals in making complaints about NHS services
- 7) Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved; and share with Healthwatch England

Policy statement

Healthwatch Coventry makes its decisions in an open and transparent way and ensures the interests of the people of Coventry are always put first. This policy and associated procedures outline the steps taken to ensure decisions are evidence based and lead to substantive impact in the community.

The governing regulations and standards are:

- The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 - referred to as Regulation 40 throughout this document.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000.

- Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles).

This policy applies to all relevant decisions made by Healthwatch Coventry

What are ‘relevant decisions’

Regulation 40 requires Healthwatch Coventry to have in place and publish procedures for making relevant decisions. Relevant decisions include:

- How to undertake our activities.
- Which health and care services we are looking at covering with our activities.
- The amounts we will spend on our activities.
- Whether to request information.
- Whether to make a report or a recommendation.
- Which premises to Enter and View and when those premises are to be visited.
- Whether to refer a matter to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Whether to report a matter concerning our activities to another person.
- Any decisions about sub-contracting.

Relevant decisions do not include day-to-day activity that may be required to carry out exploratory work prior to making a relevant decision.

Who may make such decisions?

Healthwatch Coventry is delivered by Voluntary Action Coventry, this means it is a hosted Healthwatch rather than a stand-alone organisation.

The Trustees/Directors of Voluntary Action Coventry hold accountability for:

- the safe and effective delivery of Healthwatch against the requirements of the Grant Aid Agreement from Coventry City Council.
- the finances for Healthwatch Coventry
- employment of staff.

The VAC Board delegates decision making on the areas set out below to the Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group, whose membership comprises of volunteers who live in or have a vested interest in Coventry and representatives from local voluntary groups.

Healthwatch Steering Group role

The Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group is the guardian of Healthwatch values and activities knowing the business of Healthwatch Coventry, what it stands for and how it maintains its independence and reputation.

It sets priorities and oversees activity, ensuring the activities of Healthwatch Coventry reflect the diverse communities of Coventry.

It holds services and commissioners to account for action plans in response to Healthwatch work and works to ensure changes result.

Provided that Voluntary Action Coventry Board's accountability for the safe and effective delivery of Healthwatch Coventry is not at risk of being compromised, decision-making on the following rests with the Healthwatch Steering Group:

1. How to undertake activities: which health and care services Healthwatch Coventry work covers and what work priorities are to be undertaken
2. Which services/premises will be the subject of an 'enter and view' visit, and when this will take place
3. Whether to make a report or recommendation
4. Whether to request information
5. Whether to refer an issue to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6. Whether to report anything to anyone else

The Steering Group will ensure that the decisions it makes are reflective of the priorities of the local community and use objective methods to determine work objectives and priorities.

Involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions

Healthwatch Coventry is committed to ensuring that the public/lay people and volunteers play a central role within the governance, decision making and work of Healthwatch.

This will be put into practice in the following ways:

Steering group membership

Healthwatch Coventry's Steering Group has a membership including nine lay persons (a person who is not a health or social care professional) as volunteers (a person who is not a paid employee of Healthwatch Coventry). It has clear, open

recruitment processes and how the Steering Group carries out its role is described in terms of reference [see part two of this document].

Healthwatch Coventry works to secure broad based views on its activities wherever possible.

Healthwatch Coventry chair

Healthwatch Coventry recruits a volunteer chair via open advertisement to the role description and person specification agreed by the Healthwatch Steering Group.

The term of office is three years. The panel considering Steering Group chair applications may recommend a different length of term for the Chair to the Steering Group for decision.

An extension to term may be agreed in order to ensure there is no gap between Chairs if required.

A Steering Group chair may apply for a second term of office through the open application process.

The Chair provides a key public face for Healthwatch and works to build Healthwatch influence.

The Steering Group may delegate sign off or decision making on specific pieces of work to the Chair.

All Healthwatch formal information requests will be signed by the Chair of Healthwatch (or in his/her absence the Chief Officer).

There will be a six month review after appointment of the Chair with the Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Coventry and the Healthwatch Chief Officer.

Should there be concerns that the Healthwatch Chair is not fulfilling their role in terms of understanding and positive contribution this will be discussed with them to see if support can be provided. Should this not prove workable/successful a decision to end the Chair's term can be considered by a panel consisting of the Voluntary Action Coventry's Chief Executive, the Healthwatch Chief Officer, a representative from Voluntary Action Coventry's Board and one Steering Group representative.

Volunteer roles

Healthwatch work is supported by volunteers recruited into different volunteering roles and supported by members of staff. Volunteers play an important role in the

collective of Healthwatch Coventry contributed to how Healthwatch delivers its activities.

Volunteer roles include roles designed to create links and build on links in Coventry communities.

Healthwatch Coventry Authorised Representative volunteers are recruited in accordance with the Healthwatch Coventry Enter and View policy and DBS policy.

Responsibility for authorisation is delegated to the Healthwatch Chief Officer. In accordance with Healthwatch regulations a published list of Authorised Representatives is maintained and accessible from the Healthwatch Coventry website.

Healthwatch network

Healthwatch Coventry recruits and maintains a database and mailing list of individual local people and voluntary and community organisation representatives to ensure that it has links with the local community.

This network receives information about Healthwatch work and opportunities to give their views. Some individuals become more actively involved as volunteers.

Individual people and voluntary groups with living, working, studying or with a vested interest in Coventry can join the Healthwatch Coventry network list.

How are decisions made?

The potential scope of the work of Healthwatch Coventry is large. Healthwatch covers health and social care services for all adults, children and young people in Coventry, including those who are most vulnerable or may be excluded. This means we must prioritise the issues we focus on.

The main sources to inform our work programme come from themes emerging from:

- People's experiences of health and social care services that they share with us.
- Evidence we proactively collect about specific areas of concern through the stories and enquiries we hear directly through digital and face to face engagement and our information service
- Our connections with voluntary groups operating in Coventry
- Relevant data for example local public health data

This list is not exhaustive and other relevant sources of information will be considered.

In order to prioritise, the Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group considers:

- How the issues fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Coventry operates within its statutory remit.
- How much the issue matters to local people, it must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people in health and social care.
- How much change can bring Healthwatch Coventry about. This enables us to make sure we are choosing areas where we can have the greatest impact. This is important to deliver the greatest return for our budget, maintain our independence and ensure we bring issues to the attention of the health and care system.
- Does the change need to come from Healthwatch Coventry - so we aren't focusing on things that others can do more easily and effectively?
- Finally, the Steering Group of Healthwatch Coventry will consider our work as a full set of priorities, as together they need to have the greatest impact for people using health and social care services.

Board meetings are held in public, and minutes recording decisions will be available via Healthwatch Coventry website.

Day to day operations

Healthwatch has a staff team that includes the Healthwatch Chief Officer employed by Voluntary Action Coventry.

The staff of Healthwatch Coventry are responsible for the day to day operation of Healthwatch, within strategy, priorities and parameters set by Steering group decisions.

Operational details of work will be determined by staff under the guidance of the Healthwatch Chief Officer, who may also seek the guidance of the Chair and VAC Chief Executive on potentially contentious issues. For example:

- the detail of what information to request and from whom
- the organisation of enter and view visits following a Steering Group decision to use Enter and View powers
- ongoing referral of issues and intelligence to commissioners and regulators

This list is not exhaustive

The Chief Officer of Healthwatch Coventry, has delegated decision making for:

- day to day activities to gather feedback and views on local health service and to influence the delivery, commissioning and strategy regarding local NHS and social care services;
- relevant external representation and relationship building
- volunteer recruitment and management
- publicity and marketing
- other matters to ensure the smooth operation of Healthwatch Coventry

The Healthwatch Chief Officer receives support and supervision from the VAC Chief Executive.

Voluntary Action Coventry undertakes responsibility to:

1. Ensure essential contractual requirements are met, including compliance with the terms of the Grant Aid Agreement
2. Employment matters
3. Finance processes and reporting
4. Support to the Healthwatch Chief Officer in ensuring that Healthwatch activities are delivered effectively and to plan
5. Oversee reporting and compliance through the quarterly reporting; and problem solving processes.

Breach of decision making procedure

Healthwatch Coventry must have a process for dealing with breaches of any procedure referred to in this policy document, including circumstances in which a breach would be referred to the local authority.

If a decision is taken in the name of Healthwatch Coventry without authorisation in the manner set out in this policy document, would normally be considered by the Chair of Healthwatch in the first instance, who would report back to the Steering Group with his/her understanding of the situation and what remedy is required.

This may be to either approve the decision retrospectively, or to reverse the decision.

A breach of procedure by the chair would also need to be considered by Voluntary Action Coventry's Board.

If the breach of the agreed procedure is considered to have also breached the contract between Voluntary Action Coventry and Coventry City Council it will be reported to the Local Authority and further action agreed between the Local Authority and Coventry City Council.

In each eventuality, actions will be minuted and published on Healthwatch Coventry's website.

Should the Local Authority be made aware of concerns regarding Healthwatch procedures or breach of procedure they should in the first instance refer this to Healthwatch for consideration and action

The Healthwatch Coventry complaints process may also identify or be used to address breach of procedure.

Part two: terms of reference for Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group

Membership

The largest proportion of membership of the Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group will be lay people.

Membership will be formed as follows:

- 9 individual people (one will be the appointed Chair of Healthwatch)
- 3 other voluntary and community sector organisations, identified to reflect knowledge, skills and demographics
- A representative from the host of Healthwatch Coventry

Members (other than the host) will be recruited through an application and selection process using role descriptions.

Term of office for individual Steering Group members will be three years [unless otherwise agreed] and for voluntary sector members two years. Members may apply for a further term and then must step down for a minimum of a year.

Voluntary sector members must not represent their own interest or those of their service user/members to the detriment of objectivity.

The Steering Group may agree co-options of individuals or representatives from voluntary groups to either balance the membership or bring specific knowledge/expertise as required.

The Steering Group may decide to call for or agree a different nominated person from a voluntary and community group if the original person is no longer available.

Should there be concerns regarding a Steering Group member's level of understanding to carry out the role, support will be offered by the Chief Officer and Chair.

Conduct

All Steering Group members are expected to:

- sign up to and follow the Healthwatch Coventry Code of Conduct
- follow the Nolan principles of public life
- adhere to Healthwatch policies and procedures

- follow their role descriptions
- follow the conflict of interest policy and declare any relevant interests in discussions.

Should concerns about standards of conduct regarding a Steering Group member (including the Chair) be raised the matter will be dealt with using the Healthwatch Coventry Standards of Conduct Procedure.

Should a Steering Group member be considered to be disrupting the proper running of Steering Group meetings the Chair can ask other members if they wish to suspend the individual's membership of the group and refer the matter through the Standards of Conduct procedure.

Any individual who does not attend three consecutive Steering Group meetings will be deemed to have left the group unless there are extenuating circumstances explained to Healthwatch Chief Officer and the Steering Group agrees that the member can stay on the group.

Meetings

Steering Group meetings will be meetings in public to ensure that Healthwatch Coventry is open and transparent in the discussion and decision making around its seven activities. They will take place a minimum of 5 times a year, with additional planning/ development sessions as required and agreed.

Steering Group meetings will be preceded by a confidential pre-meeting for Steering Group members only in order to ensure that there is adequate opportunity for Steering Group members to:

- form a collective view/public statement on matters they have not discussed before
- discuss draft reports and early findings from Healthwatch intelligence or work (this will usually be to prepare this for use or publication)
- to share confidential information - not yet in the public domain which has been shared with Healthwatch by others
- discuss matters which are contractually sensitive regarding Health or social care provision
- deal with internal problem solving
- or any other matter where discussion in a public arena would be prejudicial or pose risk in some way

The Steering Group may invite relevant parties to this section of the meeting if there is a need to involve them in the discussion.

The agenda for the pre -meeting and the Steering Group meeting will be agreed by the Healthwatch Chair and Chief Officer.

The Steering Group may also convene specific task groups where there would not be time within the main Steering Group meeting agenda. Task groups will be time limited and for the purpose of interrogating plans, consultations, reviewing quality account progress or holding services to account in other ways.

Task Groups will report to the Steering Group, which has authorisation and decision making powers and therefore will not be meetings in public unless the Steering Group particularly defines them as such.

Quorum

The quorum at Steering Group meetings is 7 or 50% of the full membership (not included vacant places or people who are unable to take part due to ill health etc). The Chair has a casting vote if required.

Part three: Implementation and monitoring

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement

Healthwatch Coventry is committed to ensuring all decisions made are free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Healthwatch Coventry will monitor this policy in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

Review of policy document

The Steering group of Healthwatch Coventry will review the effectiveness of the decision making policy and procedures set out in this document every two years

The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch Coventry.

Procedures

Healthwatch Coventry undertakes to carry out the following procedures:

1. Publish the most up to date policy document on Healthwatch Coventry's website.
2. Review and obtain approval every year two years
3. Ensure all Healthwatch staff and Steering Group members are familiar with the policy
4. Publish minutes from Board meetings where decisions are made in a timely manner on Healthwatch Coventry's website. Where decisions are made outside of board meetings, they will be ratified at the subsequent Board meeting.

Appendix: Our work prioritisation decision making tool

Healthwatch Coventry is using a weighted decision making scale in order to prioritise areas of work. The following questions are scored out of 5 and then a weighting is applied. This score is multiplied by the weighting to produce the Total weighted score.

1. What level of evidence is available (soft intelligence, qualitative, quantitative information; data etc)?
2. Is the issue being dealt or should it be dealt with elsewhere? (consider HW remit/role and check for ongoing work by other bodies)
3. What is the impact on the community as a whole?
4. What is the impact on particular communities or groups of service users (people who are less heard)?
5. Can the Healthwatch add make difference to the current situation (are there good routes of influence for changes)?
6. Is the right point in time to make an impact (eg service being reviewed, point in service commissioning cycle?)

Factors	1. Extent of evidence available		2. issue being dealt with by elsewhere effectively		3. impact on community as a whole		4. impact on least heard (equalities impact)		5. HW can make a difference and add value		6. Is this the right point in time to make an impact		Total Weighted score
Weighting	3		1		2		5		4		3		
	Initial score	Weighted score	Initial score	Weighted score	Initial score	Weighted score	Initial score	Weighted score	Initial score	Weighted score	Initial score	Weighted score	
example													

Once an item is identified as a high priority it will be placed within the work programme if resources allow. Those scored as medium to high priority will be considered as part of a work programme, but will be subject to the availability of resources. Those scored below medium priority may be resubmitted in the future should there be a significant change in the situation.

This system is operated by staff who have access to a tracking system logging uses and concerns with local NHS and care services and kept under review by the Steering Group. The weightings were agreed by the Steering Group. Where there is uncertainty regarding what priority to give a piece of work this will be discussed by the Steering Group.

Appendix: The Seven Principles of Public Life

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.