

Governance, involvement and decision making policy

1. Purpose of this document

This document sets out the governing, decision making and involvement structures within Healthwatch Coventry. It also incorporates the process for breach of decision making processes, which all Local Healthwatch are required to have.

2. Our mission

Healthwatch Coventry is provided by Voluntary Action Coventry.

Healthwatch Coventry is the independent champion for health and social care services in Coventry listening to local communities, patients, users of care services and carers; and representing patients and service users interests and views.

Healthwatch Coventry actively works to listen and reach out to communities to influence the delivery and planning of local services to ensure that local people have a voice and services are made better.

Healthwatch supports local people to understand and enact their rights and responsibilities in health and care and to enable them to raise issues with individual treatment or care.

3. Role of Healthwatch

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 created the role for local Healthwatch

The seven functions of local Healthwatch are:

- 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/or providing the 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

4. Governance structures

4.1 Voluntary Action Coventry Board of Trustees

Role

The Trustee/Directors of Voluntary Action Coventry have overall responsibility for safe and effective delivery of Healthwatch against the requirements of the Grant Aid Agreement from Coventry City Council.

Responsibilities

- Accountable for the safe and effective performance of Healthwatch Coventry against the requirements of the grant
- Ensures accountability of the agents/organisations delivering activity

Reporting and decision-making

- Receives quarterly reports on the delivery of Healthwatch Coventry including reports from those with a joint working agreement in order to assess ongoing performance and to act on any performance issues
- Decision-making by exception - most, if not all, decisions would be taken elsewhere within governance structures provided that the safe and effective performance of Healthwatch Coventry is not compromised.
- The Board delegates the role of deciding and overseeing the Healthwatch Coventry work programme to the Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group

4.2 Healthwatch Steering Group

4.2.1 Role

To look across all Healthwatch activity and to set vision and strategy including engagement and communications. The Steering Group oversees the work of Healthwatch to ensure it is open and accountable; effective; meets good practice and fulfils the role of Healthwatch. It provides independent challenge to the delivery of Healthwatch Coventry by Voluntary Action Coventry and the delivery partners.

4.2.2 Responsibilities

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. Setting strategy (outcomes based)
3. Oversight of intelligence about services from data and lived experience
4. Determining and setting priorities based on intelligence and evidence
5. Acting as guardian for all elements of Healthwatch activity
6. 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.
7. Ensuring the activities of Healthwatch reflect the diverse communities of Coventry
8. Ensuring an open and transparent Healthwatch where actions and decisions can be explained to the public and are regularly communicated across Healthwatch, to partner organisations and to the outside world
9. Maintaining the reputation of Healthwatch across all its activities and working relationships.

4.2.3 Decision making

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 matters rests with the Healthwatch Steering Group.

- a) How Healthwatch undertakes its activities: which health and care services Healthwatch Coventry work covers; what engagement is under taken; what enter and view activity; and what other work priorities are to be undertaken and how resources will be used to undertake work
- b) Which services/premises will be the subject of an 'enter and view' visit, when this will take place
- c) Whether to make a report or recommendation
- d) Whether to refer an issue to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- e) Whether to refer information to Healthwatch England
- f) Whether to report anything to anyone else
- g) Whether to raise a question of concern regarding Healthwatch delivery with the Voluntary Action Coventry Board

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.

The quorum at Steering Group meetings is 7 members or 50% of full membership, whichever is fewer.

4 Involving the public lay people and volunteers in Healthwatch Coventry

4.1 Policy statement

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:

4.2 Steering Group membership

The largest proportion of membership of the Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group will be lay people. Membership will be formed as follows:

- 8 individual people bringing a range of identified knowledge and skills (one will be the appointed Chair of Healthwatch)
- A representative from the Lead provider for the Healthwatch contract
- Organisations with joint working agreements to deliver Healthwatch activity may be asked to attend certain meetings
- 3 other voluntary and community sector organisations, identified to reflect knowledge, skills and demographics

Members will be recruited through an application and selection process using role descriptions and a framework for the skills, knowledge and perspective which should be reflected within the Steering Group membership.

Each member will take lead regarding a particular service area for the NHS or social care services eg primary care services; mental health services to ensure coverage of all local services.

Term of office for individual Steering Group members will be 3 years [unless otherwise agreed] and for voluntary sector members 2 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.

Healthwatch delivery partners - bring reports of the work they are undertaking including information and ICAS work to inform the decision making of the Steering Group. They will remain members for as long as they are involved in the delivery of Healthwatch functions.

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

The Steering Group may decide to call for a different nominated person from a voluntary and community groups 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
- 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 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 3 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.

4.3 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.

Healthwatch may hold other ad hoc public meetings in the course of its work for specific purposes and to inform its work.

4.4 Volunteers

4.4.1 Healthwatch Chair

This is voluntary role which is recruited by open advertisement to the role description and person specification agreed by Voluntary Action Coventry's Board and the Healthwatch Steering Group. The term of office is 2 ½ years.

The Steering Group term of office for a Healthwatch chair reaching the end of their term as chair will continue until the following year's Steering Group recruitment round.

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

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

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

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.

During the first six months or at any point thereafter 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.

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).

4.4.2 Volunteer roles

Healthwatch work will be supported by teams of volunteers recruited into different volunteering roles. Volunteers will be members of Healthwatch Coventry and co-ordinated and supported by members of staff.

The conduct of volunteers is governed by the Code of Conduct; and Conflict or Interest policy. Volunteers should have due regard to all other policies and procedures.

Relevant training is provided for volunteers to support them in their roles and out of pocket expenses are paid.

Authorised Representatives

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.

4.5 Healthwatch Membership

Healthwatch Coventry recruits and maintains a membership of individual local people and voluntary and community organisation representatives to ensure that it has links with the local community. Members receive information about Healthwatch work and opportunities to give their views. Some members may become more actively involved as volunteers.

Membership is open to:

1. Healthwatch membership is open to:
 - Individual people who live in Coventry, or,

- people who are informal or family carers for people who live in Coventry who use Coventry health and/or social care services, or
 - people who live on the borders of Coventry but have a GP in Coventry
2. A representative of a voluntary or community group that operates in Coventry
 3. People studying on a relevant course at a higher educational facility in Coventry (whether they live in Coventry or not) who wish to volunteer within Healthwatch.

Members will remain a part of Healthwatch until they request to leave or, in exceptional circumstances, if their membership is terminated by a majority decision of the Steering Group as a result of conduct deemed to be incompatible with the Healthwatch values or policies and procedures, the member having first been offered the opportunity to explain their conduct.

4.6 Annual Reporting

Healthwatch Coventry will produce an annual report setting out its work and achievements related to its activities. Whilst this is information for Healthwatch England, the Department of Health and other health and social care bodies, it is also information for the local public. The annual report shall be approved by the Steering Group and Voluntary Action Coventry's Board.

5. Day to day operations

Healthwatch has a staff team that includes the Healthwatch Chief Officer employed by Voluntary Action Coventry as well as staff in the organisations with joint working agreements to deliver specific Healthwatch functions.

The staff of Healthwatch Coventry are responsible for the day to day operation of Healthwatch, with the Steering Group setting the strategy which provides the priorities and parameters for them to work within. Strategic level decisions are taken by the Steering Group and are published to the public via the minutes of the Steering Group meetings e.g

- how Healthwatch undertakes its activities as an overall strategy
- which health and care services Healthwatch Coventry covers with our activities
- whether to make a report or a recommendation
- whether to use Enter and View powers
- whether to refer a matter to an overview and scrutiny committee
- whether to refer a matter to anyone else
- etc

The more operational details within those decisions 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, e.g.

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

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
- management of relevant budgets
- 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:

- a. Ensure essential contractual requirements are met, including compliance with the terms of the Grant Aid Agreement
- b. Support the Healthwatch Chief Officer in ensuring that Healthwatch activities are delivered effectively and to plan
- c. Oversee reporting and compliance through the quarterly reporting; and problem solving processes

6. Breaches of decision making procedure

A breach of the decision making process set out in this 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.

A breach of procedure by the Steering Group itself or the Chair would need to be considered by Voluntary Action Coventry's Board.

The local authority will be made aware of breaches of procedure and actions taken to address it in circumstances where a significant impact has resulted. This would take place via the Contract management meetings with the local authority or by specific contact if the timeframe required this.

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.

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 structured evidence is available (quantative information; data etc)?
2. What level of unstructured evidence is available (soft intelligence, qualitative information)?
3. Can HW make an impact in the time available?
4. Is the issue being dealt with effectively by someone else already or is work ongoing?
5. What is the impact on the community as a whole?
6. Can the Healthwatch add value or make difference to the current situation (are there good routes of influence for changes)?
7. What is the impact on particular communities or groups of service users (including seldom heard)?

Factors	1. Structured evidence available		2. unstructured evidence available		3. ability to impact within useful timescales		4. issue being dealt with by someone else effectively		5. impact on community as a whole		6. HW can make a difference and add value		7. Equalities impact assessment		Total Weight score
Weighting	3		4		2		1		2		4		4		
	Initial score	Weighted score	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 b 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.