

Information about our Steering Group role and how to apply

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Introduction

Our Steering Group has nine places for local people as volunteers and three places for representatives of local voluntary and community groups. This group is at the heart of Healthwatch Coventry.

People are recruited to some of the places every year through an open application process. This year due to COVID-19 we have more vacancies than usual.

This document tells you about the role of Healthwatch and how the Steering Group fits in, what it does, what is involved, and how to apply.

It covers both individual volunteer places on the Steering Group and voluntary/ community group places.

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch Coventry is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear what local people think about NHS and social care services and work to improve care.

Healthwatch Coventry is one of 151 local Healthwatch around the country.

Healthwatch was created by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and retains powers given through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 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 on the quality of local NHS and care services
- 6) Recommend investigation or special review of provider services via Healthwatch England or Care Quality Commission (CQC)

This means we work:

- From the point of view of those who use or care for people who use local NHS and social care services
- In a credible way when representing local peoples' aspirations, experiences and views. To make sure the voices and views of local people are taken seriously by service managers and planners
- To hold services to account for the decisions they make.

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

The role of the Steering Group

The Healthwatch Coventry Steering Group consists of:

- Nine places for individual local people (volunteers) who bring different perspectives, experience, knowledge and skills to help guide the work of Healthwatch Coventry
- Three 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]
- One representative from the voluntary organisation delivering Healthwatch services

The Steering Group is responsible for:

- How to undertake activities: which health and care services Healthwatch Coventry work covers and what work priorities are to be undertaken
- Determining and setting priorities based on intelligence and evidence
- Maintaining the values Healthwatch Coventry
- Ensuring the activities of Healthwatch reflect the diverse communities of Coventry
- Working to ensure Healthwatch work is effective and influential and brings outcomes for local people
- Ensuring an open and transparent Healthwatch where actions and decisions can be explained to the public and are regularly communicated

- Maintaining the reputation of Healthwatch across all its activities and working relationships

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: www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk/report/2021-09-01/healthwatch-coventry-decision-making-policy)

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. There is an additional annual Healthwatch Coventry public meeting.

Members also:

- review and approve work such as draft Healthwatch reports in between meetings
- receive regular updates
- spend time familiarising themselves with local health and social care services and with information related to patient and public experiences of using these services

Members can also represent Healthwatch at a range of meetings and forums, some regular and some adhoc.

Individual members will hold their position for 3 years, and then can reapply for a further term. After this they must step down for at least a year.

Voluntary and community sector members have a two year term, and can then re-apply.

Support

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

Healthwatch England produces resources and holds workshops/events.

Healthwatch provides a volunteer induction course for all Healthwatch volunteers.

Benefits of involvement

You will be working 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 are not able to 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.

Healthwatch is not party political so serving local politician are not eligible for the Steering Group.

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.

How to apply

Complete the application form and return it to healthwatch@vacoventry.org.uk by 29 November 2021. Applications will be considered by a panel and meetings with applicants will be arranged.

Please contact Ruth Light Healthwatch Chief Officer if you would like to discuss the role: email r.light@vacoventry.org.uk

Steering Group member 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 look at consultation documents, service plans and strategies - thinking critically about information received
3. Developing and maintaining an understanding of health and wellbeing issues in Coventry and knowledge of local NHS and social care services
4. To champion the views of local people and good practice in patient and public involvement in the NHS and social care
5. Playing an active part in the Healthwatch role of being a critical friend to NHS and social care services and commissioners to account
6. Maintain effective working relationships with other organisations including NHS and social care commissioners and providers as required
7. Represent Healthwatch Coventry at agreed meetings/events and report back
8. Act as an Ambassador for Healthwatch Coventry
9. Uphold the values and ethics of Healthwatch Coventry

In addition voluntary/community sector organisation members provide:

- A) A link to the wider membership, or people who use that voluntary/community organisation, in order to support Healthwatch reach and work
- B) The experience and perspectives of the voluntary/community organisation

NB Voluntary sector Steering Group members must not represent their groups/organisation's interests or those of their service user/members to the detriment of objectivity.

Essential qualities and experience required

- A strong interest in and passion for citizens/patients being at the centre of improvements in health and social care
- Strong 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
- Live or work in Coventry or have another strong connection (vested interest) to Coventry
- Time and commitment to carry out the role and undertake training as necessary
- Ability to work co-operatively and constructively with others for the benefit of all those concerned with health and social care across Coventry
- Ability to listen to others and communicate in meetings
- The ability to contribute to group meetings/discussions 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
- Commitment to develop knowledge of local health and social care services and commissioning
- The ability to deal with confidential information sensitively and appropriately
- Open to learning and development
- Ability to write short reports of meetings attended in order to feedback to the wider group/Chief Officer

Desirable

- Understanding of the local NHS and social care services
- Use of and access to email, Microsoft Word, and Internet

Appendices

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.

Healthwatch Coventry values

Independent	Inclusive	Listening	Rigorous	Constructive	Trustworthy	Open and accountable
We make our own decisions about work priorities and fulfil our duty to have and publish a decision making process	We value Inclusivity. Those who are least heard are important to us and there is much to be learnt by their experiences	We recognise the value of listening to people and work to ensure people's views and experiences of local services are heard	We focus on doing good quality work to gather experiences of health and care. Bringing together the experiences of different people	We work in partnership to achieve objectives; collaborating but staying impartial. Representing the interests of patients/ public	We will be a trusted source of information for the public; answering question about NHS and social care services	Our role is to work for local people and we will do our work in a transparent way