

Health and Wellbeing Board

3 July 2014

Healthwatch County Durham: Annual Report 2013-14



Report of Judith Mashiter, Joint Chair, Healthwatch County Durham

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the first year of operation of Healthwatch County Durham.

Background

2. In April 2013 Healthwatch County Durham was established as the consumer champion for health and social care services. To date the Healthwatch County Durham service has been operated under contract to Durham County Council by Carers Federation.
3. Quarterly monitoring reports have been submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board throughout the year.
4. The first Annual Report of Healthwatch County Durham has now been published and attached at Appendix 2. Key messages from that report are detailed below.

Governance, leadership and staffing

5. A priority throughout the first year of operation was to lay the foundations of sound governance. Although it took time to achieve this, most of the policies and procedures are now in place to allow Healthwatch County Durham to operate as a responsible, credible and respected organisation effectively championing consumer interests in health and social care.
6. There have been changes in leadership and board membership throughout the year. At the end of April 2014, two Joint Chairs were appointed and an additional three governors formed the Board.
7. Staff from the previous LINK organisation have been joined by newly appointed staff. The current establishment is three full-time and three part-time staff.
8. Healthwatch County Durham is a membership organisation. At the end of 2013/14, there were 790 members across the three categories of membership (Friends, Facilitators and Partners). In addition, 12

volunteers had been fully trained as Enter and View Authorised Representatives.

9. The intention is for Healthwatch County Durham to become an independent social enterprise by March 2015. Initial plans are underway to achieve this goal.
10. In June 2014 Healthwatch County Durham launched its first strategic plan and an operational business plan for 2014/15.

Engagement with stakeholders and partners

11. In order to be an effective consumer champion, Healthwatch County Durham recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with service providers and those who commission services for the local population. Efforts have been made to engage with many of the key networks, Foundation Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Patient Experience Teams. Relationships have also been forged with regulators and a number of patient/user support groups. Work is ongoing and communication protocols, for example with the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch England are to be agreed as a priority early in 2014/15.

Engagement with the public

12. Healthwatch County Durham wants to ensure that all sections of the local population have the opportunity to 'make their voice heard'. Activities held throughout the year have enabled the public to share their views, concerns, grumbles and experiences with staff, volunteers and governors. A Freephone service is widely publicised and contact is encouraged also through website and social media technologies. Staff have carried out awareness-raising in a wide cross-section of community and support contexts within the county. Monthly information and signposting 'drop-in' sessions are held in Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Durham City and Peterlee.

Collaboration and partnership working

13. Towards the latter part of its first year, Healthwatch County Durham began to undertake collaborative projects where synergy could be achieved and duplication avoided. With Healthwatch Darlington we conducted a 'patient experience journey' qualitative piece of work on dementia care; a governor is representing the north east of England on the Healthwatch England first Special Inquiry into unsafe discharge from hospital, specifically as it relates to three vulnerable groups (the homeless, those with mental health conditions and the elderly).

Recommendations

14. The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Receive this report and note the progress which Healthwatch County Durham has achieved during its first year
- Note the organisation's ongoing work as consumer champion for health and social care services.

Contact: Judith Mashiter, Joint Chair, Healthwatch County Durham, Tel. 01325 375 960

Background papers: Healthwatch County Durham Annual Report 2013/14

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - Healthwatch County Durham has regard to the Equality Act 2010 and a specific objective is to provide all sections of the local population with the opportunity to have their views and experiences of health and social care listened to and represented.

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications - None