

Health and Wellbeing Board

28 January 2015



Update from Healthwatch County Durham

Report of Judith Mashiter, Chair, Healthwatch County Durham

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the strategic direction, structural changes, activities and outcomes of Healthwatch County Durham during the period April to September 2014.

Background

2. Since the Annual Report 2013/14 was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2014 there has been a period of consolidation of strategic planning, work programme planning and delivery of engagement activities.
3. Healthwatch County Durham is currently operated under contract to Carers Federation, commissioned by Durham County Durham. The contract is due to finish in March 2015 and plans are currently being made for new arrangements.
4. The board, staff and volunteer team of Healthwatch County Durham continues to evolve and develop in response to experience and better understanding of the stakeholder landscape.
5. The three strands of Healthwatch work are:
 - Listening – to patients of health services and users of social care services to find out what they think of the services they receive;
 - Advising – people how to get the best health and social care for themselves and their family; and
 - Speaking up – on consumers' behalf with those who provide health and social care services.
6. Healthwatch County Durham publishes an e-bulletin every fortnight.

Strategic direction

7. Healthwatch County Durham has published 'Our Plan', setting out its strategic priorities for 2014/15 to 2016/17. These align with the priorities of many key organisations within the local health and social care economy. The two priority issues on which Healthwatch County Durham will gather people's views are: Integrated health and social care; and 'Making sense of it all' (knowledge, understanding, accessibility and navigation around the systems). The three priority groups of people with whom Healthwatch County Durham will engage with are: Those seldom heard; Children and young people; and The elderly and those with dementia.

Governance and organisational change

8. As was always the requirement for Local Healthwatch organisations, the board is preparing for the organisation to operate as an independent social enterprise. In November 2014 Healthwatch County Durham Community Interest Company was established. Preparations are on target for the transition from Carers Federation between January and March 2015.
9. The decision has been made to recruit an Advisory Board which will look after the Healthwatch consumer champion service delivery, whilst the Corporate Board (existing) will be responsible for the business, infrastructure, governance and finance functions which will enable the organisation to deliver its consumer champion activities.
10. Volunteers are a valuable resource to Healthwatch County Durham. Three categories of volunteer involvement have been developed: Helpers (who actively support engagement activities, receive invitations to participate in surveys, consultations etc, and who offer insight, views and suggestions based on personal experiences), Healthwatchers (who promote Healthwatch and act as our eyes and ears in their local community, gathering views and comments) and Enter & View Authorised Representatives (trained to visit premises to observe service provision at first hand and collect views from service users, family members, carers and staff and then report on the nature and quality of those services and make recommendations for improvements).

Activities and outcomes, April to September 2014

11. Listening:

- Healthwatch County Durham has engaged with 1,272 people.
- This engagement was through a variety of events, workshops, drop-ins etc, and included activities with:
 - Health networks
 - Parkinsons UK
 - Wheatley Hill Women's Group
 - Durham Deafened Support
 - Durham Lip Speaking Group
 - Durham Business Group
 - Young Carers Groups (including Horizons)
 - Aycliffe Leisure Centre (public event)
 - The Bridge Young Carers Project
 - North Durham CCG People's Congress
 - Youthspeak at Durham University
 - Thornley Residents Association
 - Shildon Community Hub
 - Blind Life County Durham
 - Moving on (homeless charity)
 - A range of drop-ins held at libraries throughout the county.
- Attendance at drop-in sessions at libraries ceased in December 2014, but is being replaced with a Healthwatcher 'kit', operated by a named person supported by Healthwatch County Durham staff.
- Engagement at University Hospital of North Durham and at Bishop Auckland Hospital began during summer 2014 and will continue on a monthly basis. Engagement at the county's community hospitals will be incorporated into the programme for 2015.
- Experience has shown that the majority of responses received from the public through engagement activities focuses on primary and acute health services and not on social care services or mental health services. The Healthwatch County Durham work programme for 2015 therefore will address this gap through specific action. The next report to the Health and Wellbeing Board will report on the outcome of this work.

12. Speaking up:

- Healthwatch County Durham responds to issues which have been raised by a number of people over a period of time; it does not take action on single, isolated issues. The following are themes which Healthwatch County Durham gathered views and information about, over several months, and about which it then spoke up, included:
 - Access to GP appointments (Healthwatch raised the issue with the Practice Manager, secured commitment to changes/clarifications and then fed back to those who had raised the issues).
 - Problems with the physical environment and waiting times at Bishop Auckland Hospital Eye Clinic (Healthwatch County Durham carried out an Enter & View visit and is awaiting an action plan from the Foundation Trust).
 - Dissatisfaction with various aspects of the service at University of North Durham Accident and Emergency department such as waiting times, being sent home, lack of care and attention (Healthwatch County Durham wrote to the Patient Experience Team, have received an action plan to address the issues and will monitor implementation of this appropriately).
 - Positive comments and praise for an individual staff member from two departments at Bishop Auckland Hospital (Healthwatch County Durham conveyed this positive feedback to those concerned through the Patient Experience Team).
 - Patients who were entitled to use Blue Badge parking facilities at University Hospital of North Durham were not happy with signage and arrangements for reclaiming parking fees (Healthwatch County Durham used the opportunity to conduct an Enter & View visit as a training exercise, a report was produced, an action plan has been received from the Trust and implementation is imminent).

- Healthwatch has worked directly with numerous stakeholders to champion consumers' views. For example:
 - With DDES/NECS, Healthwatch was involved in the NEAS ambulance service engagement activities, offering independent facilitation of public events and ensuring that the public voice was heard.
 - Healthwatch has had continuing involvement with the dementia strategy implementation group, helping to shape engagement which Public Health will deliver in 2015.

- Foundation Trust Patient Experience Teams have welcomed Healthwatch commenting on draft patient literature.
 - Healthwatch contributed to a CQC consultation on draft registration prompt questions in an effort to ensure that new registrants have systems in place to receive feedback from patients and to learn from complaints.
 - Healthwatch contributed to the TEWV Equality Delivery System.
 - A contribution was made to the NECS Talking Therapies consultation.
- The Healthwatch County Durham team has been asked to contribute to a range of local, regional and national research projects and staff have been proud to do this:
 - A board member sits on the Healthwatch England Special Inquiry into Unsafe Discharge from hospital. Healthwatch County Durham coordinated and collated input to the Inquiry based on evidence gathered from Blind Life County Durham, Waddington Street (mental health issues) elderly residents and homeless people. National reports on Unsafe Discharge as it relates to elderly people, those with mental health issues and homeless people will be published in early 2015.
 - The NHS Area Team commissioned five Local Healthwatch to carry out eye health needs assessment with vulnerable groups. Healthwatch County Durham spoke to travellers, Blind Life members and rural consumers. The resulting Eye Health Needs Assessment has recently been published and included the need for a strengthened public health message about lifestyle impact on eye health.
 - The NHS Area Team invited comment on proposed changes at three GP surgeries in east Durham. Healthwatch County Durham considered that the consultation was not fully accessible or comprehensive, so we surveyed people about the consultation (did they receive it, did they feel informed etc). We liaised with the practice managers, went to all three sites at least once and gathered responses from 84 patients. A report was submitted to the Area Team highlighting that the consultation letter had either not been received or not understood by most respondents. The letter was very technical and instructed the recipient to go to their GP to ask for a survey form or to use an online survey.

13. Advising:

- Healthwatch County Durham received 106 calls to its Freephone Information and Signposting service between April and September.
- In conjunction with Healthcare Publications Ltd, Healthwatch County Durham has produced two service directories – one each for the two CCGs. These directories promote the Durham Information Guide, offer free advertising space to voluntary sector organisations which support vulnerable people, offer paid advertising to social care providers and other support agencies. Contact details are given for all CQC-registered providers in the county, and editorial coverage includes contributions from Public Health, ICA, Social Services (eg. advice on funding for social care, independent living information and choosing the right care home). The initial print run was 6,000, with copies distributed through GP surgeries, dentists and opticians as well as Healthwatch.
- Healthwatch has signposted people to a wide range of services for a wide range of issues, including: dentists, ICA, GPs, Citizens Advice, home bathing service orthodontist, tinnitus support, speech therapy and NHS Area Team and NHS England.

Recommendations

14. The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Note the activities and outcomes of Healthwatch County Durham's work in gathering views, advising people and speaking up for health and social care service users.
- Note the preparations being made for Healthwatch County Durham becoming an independent social enterprise.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

No implications

Staffing

No implications for Durham County Council

Risk

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications

Accommodation

No implications

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Human Rights

No implications

Consultation

No implications

Procurement

No implications for Durham County Council

Disability Issues

No implications

Legal Implications

No implications