

Governance Process and Accountability for Prioritising, Planning and Carrying Out Healthwatch Kent Activity

Introduction

This paper sets out the accountability and governance arrangements for Healthwatch Kent and details a governance structure, including the roles and function of governing bodies.

1. Engaging Kent CIC

Role and function

Engaging Kent is the Community Interest Company (CIC) that holds the contract for Healthwatch Kent. Directors of the company are not directors of Healthwatch Kent (HWK)

Director's responsibility is to oversee the delivery of the contract and ensure the highest standards of quality and adherence to best practice. It is the employer of staff working within HWK.

It has a duty to ensure that the governance structure and processes in place to deliver HWK are robust and that the service meets its contractual and statutory obligations. This is done via the line management of the Healthwatch Manager and delegated areas of responsibility.

The Engaging Kent CIC Board will periodically review the decisions, initiatives and activity taken by Healthwatch Kent and assure itself that the governance structures and bodies are fit for purpose. It will do this via reporting from the Manager, as well as attending Steering Group meetings as an observer.

It will scrutinise particularly that Healthwatch Kent's priorities and activity cohere with the contract performance framework and local stakeholder and national bodies' expectations of best practice.

2. Steering Group

2a Aims of the group:

- To ensure there is collective responsibility for the public (our volunteers) and paid staff in setting the priorities and strategic direction of the organisation as set out in the Healthwatch Kent Workplan and Strategy.
- To ensure the public (our volunteers) are represented at the stakeholder Planning and Liaison Group.

2b Objectives:

- Work in constructive partnership with staff and other volunteers
- To have active oversight of the process for setting annual priorities for the organisation
- Regularly review the list of priorities, receive updates on potential new more urgent priorities and advise how the list of priorities should be adjusted

- Monitor the progress of project work and other activity on priorities, hold staff and volunteers to account if they are not progressing things effectively and ensure Stakeholders are aware of any significant delays in project timeframes.
- Identify what difference a Healthwatch intervention has made and take a view on whether it is enough
- Advise on utilising Enter & View effectively
- With the Workforce Development Officer, annually monitor whether we are utilising volunteers effectively, meeting their needs and that volunteers are fulfilling their agreements
- Evaluate whether we are effectively balancing how we raise the voices of the public and challenge services to improve, with ensuring we work in a professional, collegiate, constructive manner with stakeholders
- Consider whether Healthwatch is suitably visible to public and stakeholders

The Steering Group determines which aspects of health and social care will be looked at as a priority each year. It must remain independent of any undue influence and be free to select the priorities it feels represent the best for the residents of Kent. Transparency, rigour and objectivity are the basis for Steering Group's effective and successful working.

The Steering Group is a core part of the governance arrangements through which HWK can deliver its operational and strategic objectives. The Steering Group's members make decisions based on the evidence they receive and their knowledge and expertise.

There are two mechanisms for them to set the priorities of HWK:

1. Annual priority setting
2. Regular review of the workplan and recommendations of new priorities throughout the year

2c Annual Priority Setting

The HWK Workplan of priorities is set by April each year. A long list of potential priorities is produced from three sources;

- what HWK has heard from the public,
- health commissioning plans
- social care commissioning plans.

This long list is reduced to a medium list by the Steering Group. This medium list will then go out to public vote. The Steering Group will make the final decision as to which priorities are taken forward during the year taking into account the public vote.

The Planning & Liaison Group is a meeting set up by the HWK commissioner and brings together the chair of the Steering Group, HWK paid staff, social care commissioners and health commissioners. It meets regularly to support how HWK carries out its activities with those organisations, but also feeds in potential priorities for those commissioners.

HWK records issues throughout the year that could be potential priorities (see Section 2d Regular Review), whilst commissioners develop a commissioning plan for each coming year. In January Healthwatch Kent, Health, Social Care and Public Health present their priorities for the upcoming financial year, highlighting areas that Healthwatch can bring

the most value. Some of these priorities involve HWK ongoing involvement in meetings and monitoring the progress of agreed areas, some will mean doing additional work to understand the service and the experiences of the public. HWK gathers as much information as possible on the aims of each potential priority, any known timescales and an understanding of what form the work might take. This creates the long list of potential priorities.

The steering group receives the long list and agrees which ongoing and monitoring priorities will be included in the workplan. For priorities requiring additional work the Steering Group reduces it down to a medium list of up to 12 issues They select on the basis of:

- potential for most impact and change
- what can be realistically resourced
- ensuring seldom heard groups are represented

The medium list is finalised in January and then voted on by the public through a variety of methods: face to face engagement and voting, social media polls and online survey. The votes of the public produce the final list of priorities requiring additional work (projects).

This list is then shared with the public and stakeholders by the end of March.

Project planning is undertaken from April to June where HWK speaks with key stakeholders and clarifies the detail of what outcomes are to be achieved and what activities need to be undertaken. The HWK workplan is produced with agreed timescales by end of June. The projects are carried out between July and March.

2d Regular Review

HWK is continuously ‘horizon scanning’ for issues that were unforeseen and may become urgent. The Intelligence Gathering Group (IGG) meets regularly and has representation from the Steering Group, volunteers and paid staff. It reviews information and data from multiple sources - from the public via the freephone line or via the engagement programme, large and small organisations, community and professional bodies. IGG can take action such as raise concerns with the relevant organisation and resolve things where it can, if an issue is sufficiently serious and/or complex it recommends it as a potential priority to the Steering Group.

The Steering Group reviews the HWK Workplan regularly along with IGG recommendations and determines whether they can be added to the workplan, replace an existing workplan priority, or be rejected as a priority due to insufficient resource.

The Steering Group also receives updates on the progress of projects and activities and information about levels of resources so that they can weigh the capacity of the organisation.

The group operates by discussion and consensus and is attended by the HWK Manager, who has the authority to veto any activities that they consider to be contrary to the contract performance framework, the statutory duties or best practice.

The Steering Group is empowered to take agreed actions forward within the allocated budget and available resources and determine delivery timeframes.

3 Other HWK Activity

Due to the size and scale of Kent, Area Teams act as more local versions of Healthwatch Kent, whilst aligning to the agreed priorities for the organisation.

Members share with each other what they learn from their meetings with providers, commissioners and the wider strategic picture.

They receive summaries of what HWK hears from the public and can invite updates from local providers and commissioners

They work with local stakeholders - PPG chairs, local networks, CCGs, and voluntary and community sector.

Using the information they receive Area Teams can choose to take local action e.g. contact local stakeholders raising concerns, visit services or agree to resource enter & view visits or small projects.

Where issues are more complex or affect a wider area, Area Teams can refer issues to IGG for further discussion

Each Area Team is supported by a member of the paid team, who will ensure a shared template agenda is used. Volunteers are encouraged to chair and take notes but this can be done by the paid team member if needed.

5 Teams

Volunteers also work in teams working either with a particular organisation such as a Hospital Trust, on a specialist area such as Children & Young people, or in a team on a project identified from the annual priorities. Each team is supported by a paid member of staff.

6 Signing up to support Healthwatch Kent

Healthwatch Kent is not a membership organisation, it exists to serve the whole population of Kent. Members of the public who want to be involved in our work must sign up as a volunteer and undergo induction and training.

Healthwatch holds a database of people who have asked to receive communications or wish to volunteer. This data is held in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

Networking with other voluntary sector groups or membership groups allows us to cascade Healthwatch information to a wider group of people who may not wish to register with Healthwatch directly.

7 Outcomes

We follow up all our recommendations with the relevant organisations. For larger projects we do an outcome review at six and/or twelve months after the project report is published. These outcomes are published in an impact report. Where we achieve change this is recorded in You Said We Did and published.

The Steering group receives these documents, so they can review the effectiveness of HWK in carrying out its aims and having sufficient impact. An annual Development Day

brings together volunteers, HWK paid team and HWK commissioners to review the effectiveness of our work and develop an action plan for improvements to the next years ways of working.