



Chief Executive Officer's foreword

This strategy sets out how Healthwatch Kent works and how we intend to continue working in 2015-16.



After a troubled beginning in 2013/14 Healthwatch Kent achieved a huge amount in 2014/15. We recruited, inducted and trained over 60 volunteers and two additional staff. We produced project reports on:

- Mental health inpatients
- Mental health carers
- Eastern European patients in East Kent
- Children & adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- Complaints in health and social care

Our project reports can be found here: <http://healthwatchkent.co.uk/projects>

We also undertook Enter and View visits to:

- an acute inpatient mental health ward
- 5 older person's care homes
- 5 learning disability services
- 3 A&E departments and 1 minor injuries unit
- 3 Outpatient departments

In addition to this a review of discharge arrangements in an acute hospital was completed.

We held events across the county to speak to the public about a variety of topics. We also built links with the voluntary sector, Patient Participation Groups and GP practices.

We have developed ways of working which empower our volunteers to represent Healthwatch at strategic meetings and forums across the county. We are committed to ensuring Healthwatch Kent is a partnership of volunteers and paid staff working in an open, transparent way, agreeing how we work and the issues we work on.

We have built our relationships with organisations and stakeholders via regular liaison and through our work at Kent's eight Health and Wellbeing Boards. We are seen as an objective, credible partner; this allows us to challenge poor quality services and acknowledge good practice. We are now being proactively approached by organisations to help them ensure the public are involved in service redesign.

We have come a long way in the last year which is a huge credit to the volunteers and paid staff team. This strategy describes the way we work and identifies the areas **we will** develop in 2015/16.

Steve Inett, CEO, Healthwatch Kent

About Healthwatch Kent

What is Healthwatch Kent?

Healthwatch Kent was established in April 2013 as the new independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of our community.

Healthwatch plays a role at both national and local level and makes sure that the views of the public and people who use health and social care services are taken into account.

What do we do?

Healthwatch Kent took over the role of Kent Local Involvement Network (LINK) and also represents the views of people who use services, carers and the public to the people who commission plan and provide services. Healthwatch provides a FREE signposting service for people who are unsure where to go for help. Healthwatch Kent can also ask Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission to take action on concerns raised about the quality of health and social care.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to raise the public's voice to improve the quality of local health and social care services in Kent. We listen to you about your experiences of health and social care services and take your voice to the people who commission these services.

Our FREE Information and Signposting service can help you navigate Kent's complicated health and social care system to ensure you can find and access the services that are available for you. Call us on 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk

Our Values

- Partnership of volunteers and paid staff (over 60 volunteers, 7 staff)
- Information and intelligence based
- Support and guidance for services
- Two way communications
- Partnerships and relationships - achieving more in partnership than alone
- Honest, accountable and transparent



Equality & Diversity

Healthwatch Kent recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons that are not fair.

Healthwatch Kent challenges discrimination and lack of opportunity in its own policy and practice and encourages other organisations and individuals to do the same.

Healthwatch Kent aims to create a culture that respects and values individual differences. Healthwatch Kent sees these differences as an asset to our work as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the people and organisations we serve.

In 2015/16 **we will** continue to build on our understanding of the diverse communities within Kent and proactively engage with them to gather their views about the health and social care services they receive. **We will** continue to ensure all the information and services we provide are fully accessible to all Kent residents. **We will** complete Equalities Impact Assessments for all our projects to ensure we hear the voices of those most affected. We have a programme of gathering public feedback where we focus on a different district council area each month. Before carrying out our engagement with the public in a district, **we will** have undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment and prioritised the communities we want to ensure we speak to.

Our responsibilities

In 2015/16 we will continue to use our position as a voting member of the Kent Health & Wellbeing Board to amplify the voice of the public.

Our volunteers will continue to represent the public's voice at the seven local Health & Wellbeing Boards across the county. **We will** also engage fully in agreeing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) to ensure the public are actively engaged in setting strategic priorities and Healthwatch Kent is a credible partner of the Health & Wellbeing boards.

We will scrutinise and contribute to the Quality Accounts of the main health and social care providers.

We will use our statutory power to Enter and View services to understand people's experiences of places like A&E, Outpatients departments and care homes and publish the results.

We will use our attendance at the Kent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee to give feedback from the public and contribute to investigations they undertake.

Partnership of volunteers and paid staff

Healthwatch Kent is not a membership organisation. It exists to serve the whole population of Kent regardless of whether individuals have signed up as a member.

To be actively involved members of the public can sign up as a volunteer. There are a variety of roles volunteers can undertake, and the organisation could not achieve its aims without them.

We work proactively with the general public in Kent to gather their feedback and Healthwatch Kent holds a database of people who have asked to keep up to date or contribute to what we do. Networking with other voluntary sector groups and membership groups allows us to cascade Healthwatch information to a further group of people who may not wish to register with Healthwatch directly.

Healthwatch Kent ensures that volunteers represent the public and patients of Kent, supported and partnered by a small team of paid staff. Volunteers are fully inducted and trained and understand that their role is to be the conduit for the feedback Healthwatch Kent receives, they do not use it as a platform for their own concerns.

Our volunteers are involved at every level of what Healthwatch Kent does.

They:

- help agree priorities
- gather intelligence and information
- plan and carry out Enter & View visits
- represent Healthwatch Kent at meetings and forums
- liaise with stakeholders
- gather feedback from the public
- promote Healthwatch
- work together in their locality to improve services

In 2015/16 **we will** undertake a targeted volunteer recruitment campaign to ensure our volunteers are representative of the localities and diversity within Kent. **We will** develop our induction and training and provide regular updates on agreed topics. **We will** continue to improve our internal information sharing systems to ensure volunteers feel informed and engaged.



How we work with others

We always aim to work in partnership and an open, transparent manner to ensure we are a credible partner to organisations and stakeholders.

We will strive to maintain an open, two way relationship to develop understanding and negotiation. However when we raise a concern with a statutory organisation they are required to respond to us. We avoid duplication of the work of others and aim to understand and enhance that work. We work with Kent organisations and stakeholders in a variety of ways.

Commissioners

We will continue to liaise closely with the organisations that fund services. In Kent there are seven Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who have GPs as their members and commission many community and hospital services. We meet with the CCGs regularly, sharing intelligence and informing their evaluations of the quality of services. We support them in ensuring the public are fully consulted on planned services. **We will** also work closely with NHS England who hold the contracts with GPs and specialist services.

We are a key partner in Kent County Council's strategy for improving the cost effectiveness of services and how they work more closely with health services to offer seamless service to the public.

Providers

We have strong relationships with the three hospital trusts in Kent as well as the community health trust, the community mental health trust and the ambulance trust. We update them regularly on the feedback we receive from the public about them, alert them to serious quality issues and we are supporting many of them with engaging with the public.

We will continue to visit care homes, day services and talk to the public about services they receive at home. We always raise any concerns and good practice directly with the provider before anyone else. **We will** continue to publish reports on our findings that are balanced and objective to ensure we continue to be seen as credible representatives of the public. **We will** work hard with providers to ensure recommendations are acted upon.

Inspectors

We have monthly liaison with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), who inspect all health and social care services in England. We provide intelligence on services about to be inspected and assist the CQC with listening events prior to large inspections where the public are invited to give feedback. Following inspections we are invited to 'Quality Summits' where all partners hear the outcome of the inspection before it is published and confirm what support can be given with the action plan to improve the service. We have worked with East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust and Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust following their inspections and worked in partnership with Monitor who ensure NHS services are meeting targets and are financially viable. In 2015/16 **we will** continue to work with organisations following their CQC inspection such as the mental health trust Kent & Medway Partnership Trust. Where there are serious concerns raised about a service **we will** inform the CQC who will then decide whether to inspect.

Voluntary Sector

We recognise that voluntary organisations work with the groups most disadvantaged by the way health and social care services are delivered. **We will** continue to work in partnership with those organisations to utilise their relationships with those groups so we can help ensure their views are heard. **We will** increase the number of voluntary and community groups that have a Healthwatch Kent Community Champion and ensure every group is aware of how to link with Healthwatch Kent.

Elected members

Healthwatch Kent is an independent organisation and so does not take part in party political activities or campaigns. We recognise the importance of those who are democratically elected to represent the public and **we will** continue to develop our relationships with MPs, county, district and parish councillors. The feedback they receive from the public is valuable intelligence to understand their experiences of health and social care services.

Patient engagement

We work closely with many patient and public engagement networks and forums and **we will** support them to continue to develop and be essential parts of engagement with the public:

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) are based in GP practices and are a vital network in listening to the public's views on health and social care services. We have met with many of them but **we will** ensure every PPG understands how to work in partnership with Healthwatch Kent.

The Mental Health Action Groups are regular forums for patients, carers, providers and commissioners to discuss service issues in mental health. We attend the Kent forum and are nominating Healthwatch Kent representatives on the others.

We ensure we keep in touch with carers groups and forums and will ensure we have more representatives attending. **We will** also continue to link with other patient and public engagement activities across the county.

Healthwatch England and neighbouring local Healthwatch

We are part of a network of 152 local Healthwatch organisations. The network is supported by a national organisation;

Healthwatch England. Healthwatch England (HWE) provide support to local Healthwatch and collate the work being done by them to look at the national picture. **We will** continue to work closely with HWE and share the outcomes of the work we do.

Where an issue can only be addressed on a national level **we will** escalate it to HWE who have a direct relationship with the Department of Health, NHS England and Care Quality Commission nationally, and can also lobby parliament behalf of the public.

We have worked closely with neighbouring Healthwatch in East Sussex, Bexley and Medway and in 2015/16 continue to work closely on projects that affect our residents. **We will** also continue to meet regularly with all Healthwatch in the South East to see what we can achieve on a regional level.

How we work with the public

Feedback from people about their experiences of health and social care services is the information we use to do our job, so we make it as easy as possible for the public to talk to us:

- The Information and Signposting freephone line is the easiest way to contact us on **0808 801 0102**, Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. We work hard to ensure we immediately answer any call received in the opening hours but if you have to leave a message **we will** ring you back within one working day.
- You can email on **info@healthwatchkent.co.uk** and **we will** respond within two working days.
- You can text us on **07525 861639** and **we will** respond within two working days. Use this service if you require a British Sign Language Interpreter.

The phone line cannot deal with complaints but can provide information about how to complain to the relevant organisation.

We will continue to respond urgently to cases where people are potentially at risk or the quality of a service is extremely poor.

We will continue to have quarterly liaisons with the patient experience departments in the main providers to share anonymised feedback we have received from the public and ensure we can contact the correct person urgently if necessary.

We also ensure that we meet people face to face:

- Anyone can go into their local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and be helped to contact us.
- We hold four public meetings a year, in venues across the county, to update people on our work and gather feedback.
- We visit a different district council area each month and visit libraries, CABs, community groups and events. During these 'public voice' sessions we raise awareness of Healthwatch Kent and the freephone line, give information about patient rights, gather feedback of people's experiences, and recruit new volunteers.
- We work with other organisations to deliver events to gather public views
- We work with voluntary organisations who feed us the views of their service users

In 2015/16 **we will** ensure we are easily accessible to the most disadvantaged groups in each district to ensure their voice is heard by commissioners and providers. **We will** also increase the activities our volunteers undertake in their local area to engage with the public and understand local issues re health and social care services. **We will** continue to raise awareness of Healthwatch Kent amongst the public; it is now a requirement for health services to display our information and **we will** be monitoring that this happens. We are also touring with our big red bus in June 2015 which will visit every district in Kent to raise awareness of Healthwatch Kent and gather feedback.



How we decide our priorities

From the feedback we receive from the public we look at trends in services to see what issues are affecting people the most.

We also look at the issues being discussed with commissioners and providers around the county. Healthwatch Kent have a network of volunteer representatives who attend meetings and forums throughout Kent and report back the main issues that are being discussed. We also respond to urgent issues such as the outcome of Care Quality Commission inspections and closures of services. All these issues are brought to our Intelligence Gathering Group (IGG) each month which is made up of volunteer readers.

Once we have gathered the issues volunteers read and research to understand what work might already be done in those areas to avoid duplication. This involves looking at commissioning plans and speaking with commissioners and providers to understand the current situation. If we feel the issue needs further investigation, and that the views of patients and the public have not been heard, the decision of whether it becomes a priority for further work is made by our Deliberations & Directions (DaDs) group. The DaDs group is made up of volunteers and paid staff who consider the evidence provided by IGG. If something is agreed as a priority, Healthwatch Kent will undertake further work as described in the section **how we improve services**.

In 2015/16 we anticipate the amount of feedback we receive will increase as it has in 14/15. **We will** implement systems to manage the increased amount of feedback effectively and be clear about the main themes and areas of concern.

We will continue to listen to our external representatives and the issues they discuss at meetings and forums giving them feedback on how the information has been used.



How we improve services

We can influence and improve services in a number of ways. These include:

- Under Events & Workshops section
- Change sentence to read

We will continue to host events and workshops for the public to share their experiences and to discuss ways to improve services. The people that commission and provide services will always be part of these discussions.

- **Discuss with the provider or commissioner concerned.**

This might be done by the Healthwatch Kent Chief Executive Officer or the local Area Team of volunteers. In 2015/16 **we will** continue to work in a transparent way with stakeholders to understand the issues, agree the value of the public feedback and gain assurance that the issue is being addressed.

- **Undertake an Enter & View visit to speak to patients face to face and make recommendations.**

In 2015/16 **we will** continue with our programme of Enter & View visits to social care services such as care homes and day services to speak to service users, carers, family and staff about their experiences and feed this back to the organisations involved. These reports will have recommendations which the organisations are required to respond to and are published on our website.

- **Agree to undertake a project.**

In 2015/16 **we will** continue to use some of our funding to commission community organisations and specialists in exploring issues and making recommendations. Project reports are published for the public to review what we have done.

- **Events and workshops.**

We will continue to host events to allow the public to agree actions for our projects.

- **Action plans and follow up.**

We have worked hard to ensure we follow up on our projects and monitor how actions are completed.

- **Ongoing liaison.**

We developed regular liaisons with organisations to monitor our action plans and have already seen organisations using that liaison to proactively involve us in upcoming service changes.

Where we are not able to effect improvements alone, we escalate to Healthwatch England or the Care Quality Commission.



Strategic priorities 2015/16

Below is a list of the priorities agreed by our DaDs group as described in the section

How we decide our priorities.

This list is not exhaustive and **we will** continue to respond to issues brought to our attention as described in the same section.



Improvement of Mental Health Services

We will undertake an evaluation to establish whether actions taken in response to reports published by Healthwatch Kent in 2014 have led to improvements in services for service users and carers.

Improvement in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

We will work in partnership with commissioners to ensure the voice of young people is heard in the redesign of CAMHS, now known as Children and Young People's Services (ChYPS).

Health & Social Care Complaints

We will follow up our evaluation of complaints processes in health and social care with an evaluation of the improvements that have been made from complaints and how those improvements are maintained.

End of Life Care

We will also continue to link with other patient and public engagement activities across the county.

Dentists

We will speak with patients of dental practices in Tunbridge Wells to understand their experiences, and work with those practices on evaluating their services.

Focus on Social Care Services

We will ensure we have equal focus on social care services and health services.

We will continue to work in partnership with commissioners in ensuring public participation in planning and procurement.

Children & Young Peoples Services

We will work closely with existing networks that gather feedback from young people and families. **We will** work closely with Children's Health & Wellbeing Boards to ensure that the voice of children, young people and their families are heard in setting strategic priorities and developing new services.

We will gather feedback on the challenges faced by children and their families in accessing health and social care services, in particular the experiences of schools referring children into services.

Integration of Health & Social Care Services

Healthwatch Kent has already been heavily involved in the strategies for integrating services.

We will monitor the impact of the Better Care Fund but recognise that new services put in place for this fund may need to be reviewed in 2016 for evaluation to be meaningful. In the meantime Healthwatch Kent will gather the experiences of people, in particular older people, who are moving between services e.g.

- From hospital to a care home
- From hospital to the community
- From the community to hospital

We will undertake this work where short term improvements in services can be made, without needing to wait for integrated services to become effective.

We will employ our statutory power to 'Enter & View' services to speak to service users, carers, family and staff about their experiences and feed this back to the organisations involved. These reports will have recommendations which the organisations are required to respond to.

Consultations

We will work in partnership with organisations to ensure they actively engage communities when consulting on service changes. **We will** act as a critical friend, setting out our expectations of good practice.

Governance

The funding for Healthwatch is provided by the Department of Health and passed to local authorities to administer. Kent County Council (KCC) manage the funding and Engaging Kent CiC were awarded the contract to deliver Healthwatch Kent. KCC and Engaging Kent have agreed an outcomes framework to measure the performance of Healthwatch Kent.

There are two types of governance in relation to Healthwatch Kent:

Corporate Governance:

A framework of rules and practices by which the Engaging Kent Board ensures accountability, fairness and transparency in its relationships and stakeholders with regard to Healthwatch.

Organisational Governance:

The process of overseeing the direction, running and effectiveness of an organisation, in this case Healthwatch. This is undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Deliberations & Directions Group and the Intelligence Gathering Group.

Engaging Kent CIC role and function

Directors of the Engaging Kent CIC are not directors of Healthwatch. Their responsibility is to oversee the delivery the contract and ensure the highest standards of quality and adherence to best practice. It is the employer of staff working within Healthwatch.

Engaging Kent CIC has a duty to ensure that the governance structure and processes in place to deliver Healthwatch are robust and that the service meets its contractual and statutory obligations. This is done via the line management of the Healthwatch CEO and delegated areas of responsibility. It provides assurance that Healthwatch Kent's priorities and activity cohere with the Outcomes Framework and local stakeholder and national bodies' expectations of best practice. It assesses and manages risks to Healthwatch Kent.

Deliberations and Directions Group (DaDs) Role and Function

The Deliberations and Directions Group (DaDs) is the body which determines the direction, content, format and schedule of work that reflects Healthwatch Kent's priorities and goals. Its remit is to define, shape and implement what Healthwatch Kent wants to achieve. The DaDs group is a core part of the governance arrangements through which Healthwatch Kent can deliver its operational and strategic objectives.

The DaDs members make decisions based on their knowledge and expertise; and from the evidence based information they receive from the Intelligence Gathering Group (IGG). IGG captures information and data from multiple sources - large and small organisations, public, community and professional bodies, official and lay individuals - and sorts, refines and presents it to the DaDs group.

DaDs reviews the intelligence received and determines what to act on, how to act and to whom it should award grant pot money. It is helped in this choice by testing each issue against the priority setting tool. This is a simple weighting and multiplier system that selects and assesses the potential impact of each proposed project. Transparency, rigour and objectivity are the basis for DaDs effective and successful working.

The DaDs group also receives project reports, analyses and data from the 'Enter and View' projects.

The group operates by discussion and consensus and is chaired by the CEO, who has the ability to veto any activities they consider to be contrary to the Outcomes Framework, the contract or best practice. It is empowered to take agreed actions forward within the allocated budget lines and available resources and determine delivery timeframes.



Ensuring value for money

In 2015/16 Healthwatch Kent will continue to be open and transparent about the funding it receives and how it is spent by undertaking the following actions:

- **We will** publish our accounts each year in our annual report.
- **We will** ensure funds are used effectively in the day to day operation of Healthwatch Kent.
- **We will** ensure we offer opportunities for funding for project work as widely as possible and select organisations based on the quality of the proposals as well as value for money.
- **We will** undertake value for money evaluations of project work to demonstrate robust monitoring of the use of funds.
- **We will** ensure volunteers are not left out of pocket by working with us and pay expenses according to our agreed policy.

