



Healthwatch Kent Strategy 2016/17

Chief Executive Officer's foreword

This strategy sets out how Healthwatch Kent works and how we intend to continue working in 2016-17.

We are funded via Kent County Council and March 2016 saw us come to the end of our original three-year contact term. Thanks to our effective performance we have secured a two-year extension and so will continue to deliver Healthwatch Kent up until April 2018. It will then be retendered. We have developed new ways of monitoring the outcomes we achieve, therefore want to be clear about the influence and impact we are having. We have developed a structure of Improvement Teams of volunteers to support and monitor changes in services.

There is no single method for delivering Healthwatch, and each of the 152 local Healthwatch across England works differently according to the needs of the population it serves.

Over the last three years paid staff and volunteers have learned a lot about how best to manage the challenges of working in such a large county as Kent. We are also supported by our umbrella body, Healthwatch England who have developed a quality framework to guide local Healthwatch.

We are described as the consumer champion for health and social care. This term conjures images of the excellent work organisations such as Citizens Advice do with utility companies on behalf of the public. However, the relationship between patient/service user and health and social care services is much more complex. Rather than being a passive recipient, health and social care services aim to empower people to manage their health and wellbeing, and increased empowerment means less reliance on services.

Therefore, our role must be about engaging with public health initiatives as well as services, and highlighting what patients and service users can do to support their health and wellbeing, and therefore the system.

Being a Kent-wide organisation with a statutory role to represent the public, we have regular access to discussions at a strategic level.

Our volunteers are becoming more knowledgeable about the strategic picture and understanding how organisations work and cooperate with each other.

We believe we work more effectively at this level. We have continued to develop our engagement with the public, more detail on this can be found on page 6. However, it is challenging for us to engage in detail with any local community, as we know that draws our focus from other areas of the county. We will continue to monitor issues across Kent, according to what the public are telling us.

Often we are asked to represent the views of the public, but are not given the opportunity to engage with patients and service users around that issue prior to representing them. Organisations often ask for our help in engaging with certain communities or groups.

Organisations need to better develop their own ongoing engagement processes so they have easy access to a range of people from their community. We are looking forward to supporting organisations with this which will allow us to focus our resources more effectively.

I would like to thank the volunteers for their time, commitment and energy in making Healthwatch Kent a success.

I would also like to thank the paid team for their hard work and positive approach in working with our volunteers, stakeholders and of course, the residents of Kent.

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 can also report concerns about the quality of health care to Healthwatch England, and the Care Quality Commission to take action.

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 health and social care services in Kent.

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 70 volunteers, 11 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

Our aims:

To improve services by:

1. Engaging with communities across Kent and hearing their views
2. Using feedback from the public and stakeholders to decide our priorities
3. Investigating issues by raising local improvement opportunities, undertake enter & view visits and detailed projects
4. Sharing our findings with commissioners and providers and publicly publishing our report and their response
5. Developing an action plan from our recommendations and meeting regularly with the organisation involved until the actions are completed
6. Publishing an update report on what has been achieved
7. Influencing commissioners and providers in strategic decision making
8. Ensuring high quality consultations and engagement with the public

What is the Healthwatch Kent offer?

For the Public we will:

- Give you Information about health and social care services and signpost you to the correct service, either statutory or in the community.
- Inform you about your rights as a patient/ service user, but also your responsibilities to manage your own health and support services to enable them to be effective

Where you tell us about a personal experience we will:

- Listen to your experiences and signpost you to where to make a complaint and what support is available with complaining
- Record your experiences and look at trends and themes across the county, using those trends as a basis for what we investigate further
- Escalate serious concerns to the appropriate authority and monitor the outcome
- Respond to enquiries on our Freephone line within one working day

Where you are part of a group telling us about a shared experience (a Local Improvement Issue) we will:

- Endeavour to meet as many people face to face as possible, in particular contacting groups who do not contact us by other means. Our Public Voice Programme will visit a different district council area each month and visits priority groups in that district.
- We will raise your Local Improvement Issue with the relevant organisation, ask them to respond to your group directly to advise you how they will address it, and confirm with you that we have done this.

We will also:

- Be open and transparent in how we work
- Publish the following on our website:
 - Our Strategic Priorities and Annual report
 - Our Project and Enter & View Reports
 - A monthly update of our work
 - Our workplan for the year
 - Records of our regular meetings that set our priorities

For Commissioners and Providers we will:

- Work in a spirit of partnership, sharing information, informing you about work we are undertaking and supporting work that improves patient/service user experiences.
- Share Local Improvement Issues with you that have been raised by communities in your area.
- Meet with you quarterly to discuss shared areas of concern and monitor an action plan made up of agreed issues, Healthwatch Kent report recommendations and CQC findings.
- Act as a critical friend for consultations you undertake
- Healthwatch Kent continues to get requests for input where there should be a local engagement process that can meet the need. As part of our quarterly liaison with commissioners and providers Healthwatch Kent will compare their engagement mechanisms against good practice requirements and support them with actions that will develop capacity for good quality in-house engagement.
- As Healthwatch Kent volunteers work more closely with commissioners and providers their understanding of the strategic picture grows. Healthwatch Kent can provide input in high level strategic issues where there is a need to start to look at how to work with the public or give a high level view. Further input should then be sought from local engagement processes.

For Volunteers we will:

- Be clear about the requirements and expectations of you and be open with you if there are any concerns about how you carry out your role.
- Give you clear roles so you can understand your commitment and what you will achieve.
- Give you training and experience in working in health and social care at a strategic level.
- Reimburse your out of pocket expenses
- Be appreciative of your time and efforts.

For other stakeholders we will:

Voluntary Sector

- Offer the opportunity for someone in your organisation or group to become a Community champion where you will receive a monthly update on our work and have a mechanism to tell us the experiences of the people you work with.
- Involve you in our public voice programme when we are in your area.
- Involve you in our projects where relevant.

District Councils

- Inform you when we are working in your area.
- Support councillors to share experiences of local residents.
- Keep you updated of the outcomes of our work.

To fulfil our other statutory roles we will:

- Use the outcome of escalations, projects and enter & view visits to make recommendations to Healthwatch England / Care Quality Commission to conduct special reviews or investigations.
- Use the database designed for the Local Healthwatch network to provide Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively.
- Work with CQC, Monitor and TDA where there are significant concerns about an organisation.
- Be effective participants of the Kent and local Health & Wellbeing Boards and influence decisions.
- Be effective participants of the Kent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and escalate concerns to them.
- Provide feedback on the quality accounts of providers annually.

Support from Healthwatch England and other 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 with 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.

Having an impact, influencing and bringing about change

Because we cover such a large county, it can be difficult for us to support change in individual services or communities, which would be easy to evidence.

There are 309 parishes in Kent each with dozens of different communities and groups, it is impossible for us to understand the needs of all of them, and there are other organisations such as parish councils or community groups that do this.

By affecting larger change in services used by lots of people, we can benefit more of the population. These changes often take longer, are less easy to see and harder to communicate back to the community, until they experience a better service for themselves.

Our role gives us a unique position with commissioners and providers of health & social care services, but we will use this position to work in partnership for changes that will benefit the whole community.

Therefore, we believe we are best placed to work at a strategic level to improve services and we will do this by:

1. **Engaging with communities across Kent and hearing their views**
2. **Using feedback from the public and stakeholders to decide our priorities**
3. **Investigating issues by raising local improvement opportunities, undertake enter & view visits, and detailed projects**
4. **Sharing our findings with commissioners and providers and publicly publishing our report and their response**
5. **Developing an action plan from our recommendations and meeting regularly with the organisation involved until the actions are completed**
6. **Publishing an update report on what has been achieved**
7. **Influencing commissioners and providers in strategic decision making**
8. **Ensuring high quality consultations and engagement with the public**

1. Engaging with Communities

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 we can 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. You can request a British Sign Language Interpreter through our text service and we will arrange for them to meet you face to face, near to you.

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

However, 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.

To ensure we engage equally across the county, we visit a different district council area each month and aim to make at least eight visits to a range of venues; the local libraries, council offices, community centres, children's centres and community groups.

We have analysed each district and prioritise communities and groups that are seldom heard.

We aim to avoid duplication of engagement and so will link with charities and support groups working with those communities, so they can help us understand their needs.

To support this, we have over 200 Community Champions in various organisations across the county who share feedback from the people they work with. They are contacted when we are coming to their district. We will continue to grow the number of Community Champions.

Where a group raises a Local Improvement Issue we will inform the relevant organisation, ask them to respond to your group directly to advise you how they will address it, and confirm with you that we have done this.

Where engagement or campaigning is already happening we can offer support but will not do anything that will impede or duplicate them. We cannot partner with any campaigns about services as our role is to ensure the whole community is heard and not everyone may share the views of the campaign.

We work closely with many patient and public engagement networks and forums:

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.

Healthwatch Kent is an independent organisation and so does not take part in party political activities, however 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.

We will continue to increase the activities our volunteers undertake in their local area to engage with the public such as information stands in hospitals and at events.

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 2016 which visits every district in Kent to raise awareness of Healthwatch Kent and gather feedback.

2. Using feedback from the public to 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 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 Healthwatch Kent Steering Group, which is made up of volunteers and paid staff who consider the evidence. If it is agreed as a priority, Healthwatch Kent will undertake further work as described below.

3. Investigate issues via use of Local Improvement Opportunities enter & view visits and projects

Where a group tells us about a shared experience (a Local Improvement Issue), we will raise the Local Improvement Issue with the relevant organisation, ask them to respond to your group directly to give them the opportunity to advise you how they will address it, and confirm with the group that we have done this.

We will undertake Enter & View visits to speak to service users, carers, family and staff about their experiences and produce reports on our findings. These reports will have recommendations which the organisations are required to respond to and are published on our website.

We will continue to undertake more in depth work in certain areas and produce project reports that are robust and bring the patient or service user perspective. As well as highlighting where services need to improve, reports will also identify what patients can do to better manage their health and wellbeing and utilise services effectively. Project reports are published for the public to review what we have done.

Examples of reports completed in 2015/16 are:

Nursing Care at home

Dentists

Winter Pressures

Patient Participation Groups

Mental Health inpatient wards

4. Share our findings with commissioners and providers and publicly publish our report and their response

We always aim to work in partnership and in an open, transparent manner throughout a project to ensure we are a credible partner to organisations and stakeholders. We avoid duplication of the work of others and aim to understand and enhance that work.

However, when we raise a concern with a statutory organisation they are required to respond to us. As well as working with the organisation throughout the project or enter & view, we will send them the completed report and ask for responses. Afterwards both the report and the response are published.

We will also share the report with members of the public that took part in the project and those who raised the issue via our engagement with communities.

5. Develop an action plan from our recommendations and meet regularly with the organisation involved until the actions are completed

An action plan is produced from the recommendations in our reports.

In 2016/17 we will improve our follow up with organisations by creating Improvement Teams that will work with commissioners and providers, meeting quarterly and monitoring the actions that are completed. These actions will be reported each quarter, showing what changes to services have occurred because of our involvement.

6. Publish an update report on what has been achieved

After twelve months we will publish an update report on what has been achieved.

This will highlight the impact of our work.

7. Influencing commissioners and providers in strategic decision making

We will ensure Healthwatch Kent representatives at strategic meetings actively influence decisions and plans, by ensuring engaging with the public is a key part of the process and encouraging organisations to understand patient experience.

We will report on a monthly basis where we have actively influenced discussions at meetings.

8. Ensuring high quality consultations and engagement with the public

Healthwatch Kent acts as a critical friend to organisations undertaking consultations. To assist this we created a guide to best practice

The guide to consultation has been compiled to achieve the following:

- To encourage organisations to view the public as a vital resource who can help them solve the significant financial and other resource issues they face
- To provide guiding principles to help organisations deliver genuine and meaningful public consultations
- To help organisations understand best practice and the legal requirements around consultations
- To improve the quality of engagement in developing ideas and options, and improve the communication relating to public consultations in Kent
- To help avoid public money being wasted on consultations that could be challenged
- To understand what Healthwatch Kent will be assessing when it acts as a critical friend

We will continue to perform this critical friend role in 2016/17.

We have also shared this approach with the Healthwatch network and are becoming a go-to resource for other local healthwatch dealing with consultations.

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.

We reviewed the feedback received via our Freephone line and undertook a poll during our Big Red Bus tour this year to identify the top three issues where we should undertake work. They were:

GP's - Getting an appointment
Referrals and Waiting Times
Community Mental Health Services

We will also be undertaking work on:

Carers - review of the impact of the Care Act

Equipment - review of the new service across Kent

Patient Transport - review of the new service across Kent

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.

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 plans for integrating services.

We will monitor the impact of these plans and will gather the experiences of people, in particular older people, who are moving between services e.g.

1. From hospital to a care home
2. From hospital to the community
3. 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.

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 will encourage other organisations and individuals to do the same.

Healthwatch Kent aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences.

Healthwatch Kent sees these differences as an asset to our work as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the organisations and people we serve.

In 2016/17 we will continue to ensure we understand the communities and needs within Kent and ensure we proactively engage with them to understand their experiences of health and social care services.

We will continue to ensure all the information and services we provide are fully accessible to any resident of Kent.

We will complete an Equalities Impact Assessments for all our projects to ensure we hear the voice 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.

A 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.

Healthwatch 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 or 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 2016/17 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.

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 (Community interest Company) 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: is the process of overseeing of the direction, running and effectiveness of an organisation, in this case Healthwatch. This is undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and the Healthwatch Kent Steering Group.

Engaging Kent CIC role and function

Directors of the company are not directors of Healthwatch Kent. Their 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 Healthwatch.

It 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.

Healthwatch Kent Steering Group Role and Function

Formerly two groups; the Deliberations and Directions Group (DaDs) and the Intelligence Gathering Group (IGG), the aims of the group are:

- To ensure there is collective responsibility for the public (our volunteers) and paid staff in setting the priorities of the organisation
- To ensure Healthwatch Kent resources are deployed effectively
- To ensure Healthwatch Kent is acting appropriately to achieve its main aims

The group operates by discussion and consensus and is chaired by the CEO, who has the ability to veto any activities that 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 2016/17 Healthwatch Kent will continue to be open and transparent about the funding it receives and how it is spent.

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 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.

If you would like any more information, do please contact us on our Freephone number 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk