

## Decision-Making Protocol July 2018

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Healthwatch Hartlepool needs to have a standardised decision-making process. This paper sets out the process by which decisions relating to strategic and operational priorities will be made and the roles that the various parties have in the process.
- 1.2 In this paper an “issue” is any matter that could impact on health and adult social care in Hartlepool.
- 1.3 The Healthwatch Hartlepool staff team will act as the ‘clearing house’ for issues and all issues, regardless of their source, will be raised with the Manager and managed through this process (e.g. monthly steering group meeting).
- 1.4 Established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the requirements set out in the legislation mean Healthwatch Hartlepool will be expected to:
  - Obtain the views of the wider community about their needs for and experience of local health and social care services and make those views known to those involved in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of health and social care services.
  - Promote and support the involvement of a diverse range of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services through membership of local residents and service users.
  - Make reports and recommendations about how those services could or should be improved.
  - Provide information to the public about accessing health and social care services together with choice in relation to aspects of those services.
  - Represent the views of the whole community, patients and service users on the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Hartlepool Clinical Commissioning Group (locality) Board.
  - Make the views and experiences of the broad range of people and communities known to Healthwatch England helping it to carry out its role as national champion.

Additionally we may make recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to carry out special reviews or investigations into areas of



concern (or, if the circumstances justify it, go direct to the CQC with recommendations, if for example urgent action were required by the CQC).

## **2. Gathering issues**

- 2.1 The Healthwatch staff team will gather issues from 'calls' [via internet; public meetings; newsletters or outreach], research shall be undertaken done by the staff team, volunteer steering group or the Board of Directors. There shall be regular analysis of the issues raised by members of the public or members of Healthwatch at our monthly, public steering group meetings.
- 2.2 The Healthwatch Manager shall make regular reports to the Board about activities designed to gather issues and how effective these different activities have been.
- 2.3 Gathering issues is an open and on-going process but will be subject to periodic intensive promotion. Emergency issues can be raised at any time and will be dealt through an established emergency process (see below).
- 2.4 All individuals and groups raising issues will receive an acknowledgement that the issue has been received. The details of how their issue is to be handled by Healthwatch Hartlepool shall be conveyed to the source of the issue too.

## **3. Reporting issues to the Board**

- 3.1 In their role as 'clearing house' the Staff Team will report all issues to the "Volunteer Steering Group". The Staff Team shall also report on emerging issues.
- 3.2 Reports on specific issues will include:
  - An assessment of how the issues fits, or do not fit, within the Healthwatch Hartlepool work programme
  - A summary of the evidence, if any, gathered to date
  - An analysis of the priority of the issue [see below]
  - Details of any other work that appears to be have been done around the same issue by others or historically by Healthwatch Hartlepool
  - An outline project plan, including any potential budget implications and timeline for the work that would be required on the issue. These proposals should include, where practicable, options for staffing a project that might include:
    - The Staff Team managing the work of a group or individual
    - The Staff Team co-ordinating the work of a group of organisations
    - Contracting the work out to a single organisation or group of organisations
- 3.3 Reports will be agreed, where possible, with the individual or group that have raised the issue, and the individual or group will be offered the opportunity to make a brief presentation to the Volunteer Steering Group where appropriate.

## **4. Decision making**

- 4.1 The Board of Directors shall make all strategic decisions of Healthwatch Hartlepool



in consultation with the Healthwatch Manager. The Board shall normally meet on a monthly basis with minutes of such published on the website [www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk) The Board of Directors will decide on the possibility of Healthwatch Hartlepool taking action on any issue based on evidence presented to them. The decision will be based on:

- An assessment of the importance of the work and the impact of the issue on the Healthwatch Hartlepool as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.
- The cost of the work – including consideration of the various options for completing the work.
- The possibility that other organisations could undertake the work or may have undertaken it previously

4.2 The Volunteer Steering Group shall oversee the delivery of the ratified annual Work Programme and shall consider amongst others, the options of:

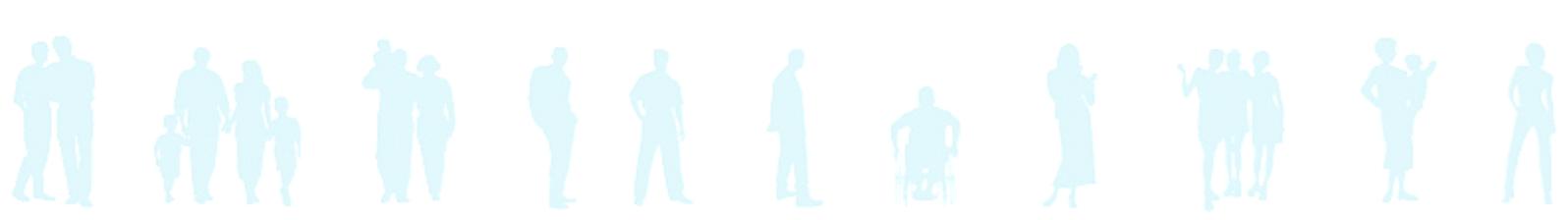
- Asking the Staff Team or lead member within the Steering Group to prepare additional evidence to be presented at a later monthly meeting.
- Agreeing that the issue is a priority and agreeing [or amending] the outline project plan
- Asking the Staff Team to seek partners, including other Local Healthwatch organisations, to complete a piece of work collaboratively
- Deciding that the issue is not one that Healthwatch Hartlepool should or can pursue in line with their functions articulated within the Health & Social Care Act 2012
- Letting the matter 'lie' and asking the Manager to monitor developments with a view to considering the matter again at a later date.

4.3 In the case of an emergency issue, defined as one that requires action before the Board is able to meet, the Chairman of the Board is empowered to make a decision on the advice of the Healthwatch Manager. Similarly, operational matters, within the remit of the work programme may be progressed by the Healthwatch Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Volunteer Steering Group albeit decisions shall be subsequently presented for ratification by Steering Group.

4.4 Once an issue has been agreed to be part of the Work Programme the Volunteer Steering Group and Manager shall be responsible for making sure that the work is progressed. Summary reports may be available to the Board and/or Steering Group at each of their monthly meetings.

4.5 At the conclusion of any piece of work, or at agreed milestones, the Volunteer Steering Group will make decisions as to the next actions to be taken. The Steering Group shall agree any report before publication and decide to whom it will be referred or reported. Options include:

- Discussions with the service provider and/or commissioner
- Referral to the Council's Audit & Governance Committee
- Referral to the Council's Health & Wellbeing Board
- Referral to the Care Quality Commission
- Referral to Healthwatch England



- Seeking a wider public debate around an issue
- Other actions

## **5. After a Volunteer Steering Group meeting**

5.1 A staff team member shall write to all individuals and groups whose issues were discussed at said meeting to inform them of our decision and briefly explain the reason for that decision. If appropriate, for example if the Steering Group feels that an issue would be better pursued through a complaints procedure, the Manager will endeavour to advise the individual or group as to the options and could, with their agreement, seek to make a referral to an appropriate organisation such as the Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA) service.

## **6. Criteria for considering priorities within Healthwatch Hartlepool**

6.1 In order for an issue to be considered by Healthwatch Hartlepool it must meet the following criteria:

- It must relate to health and/or adult social care services.
- It must affect or have the potential to affect, the residents of Hartlepool

6.2 Once an issue has been identified that meets the above criteria it can be forwarded for consideration into the Healthwatch Hartlepool Work Programme. The following criteria will be used to prioritise issues for inclusion in the plan:

- Number of people affected by the issue
- Impact of issue on individuals
- Levels of disadvantage and/or vulnerability of individuals affected
- Potential impact of Healthwatch Hartlepool action
- The resources available to Healthwatch Hartlepool [in the event that sufficient resources are not available to allow a piece of work to be included in the plan the matter must be referred to the Board of Directors for further consideration.

6.3 Volunteer Steering Group and Board decisions shall be by a simple majority of those present subject to the meeting being quorate.

## **7. Review**

This policy will be reviewed by August 2020

**Healthwatch Manager  
July 2018**

