

Governance Structure and Terms of Reference

1. Background

Healthwatch is part of the government's health and social care reforms introduced under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. A principle of the reforms is that patients and the public must be at the heart of everything our health and social care services do.

Healthwatch West Berkshire is the independent consumer and public champion for health and social care services in West Berkshire. Its aims are to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Healthwatch West Berkshire identifies the local trends and areas of concern about health and social care issues, informs people about the services available to them, supports them in making complaints about NHS services, and ensures that their views are integral to local commissioning processes and are raised at national level via Healthwatch England.

Healthwatch West Berkshire has been hosted by The Advocacy People since December 2014. The Advocacy People have a successful track record of over 20 years providing a wide-range of statutory and non-statutory advocacy services such as Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy, Community Mental Health Advocacy, Independent Mental Health Advocacy and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy.

Delivering health complaints advocacy puts The Advocacy People in a unique position having substantial experience of: supporting people through the NHS Complaints Procedure; working alongside local health services to resolve individual NHS complaints; achieving successful outcomes from NHS complaints for patients and their families.

The Advocacy People also host Healthwatch in other areas. For an up-to-date list of services, [click here](#).

2. Vision, Mission, and Values

Championing the views of local people to achieve excellent health and social care services in West Berkshire

Mission

- Listening to people views, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their needs, and promoting the involvement of local people in health and social care decision making
- Working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, seeking a stronger voice, together
- Using our statutory powers to hold to account commissioners and providers to improve services
- Empowering and informing people to get the most from their health and social care services

Values

The following characteristics define how the staff and volunteers of Healthwatch West Berkshire should behave towards each other, partners and stakeholders, and people in West Berkshire. They are:

- Inclusive
- Transparent
- Accessible
- Accountable
- Independent
- Collaborative
- Proactive

3. Governance Structure (See Appendix)

3.1 Healthwatch West Berkshire Advisory Board – responsibilities

The Healthwatch West Berkshire Advisory Board oversees the strategic direction and operational activities of Healthwatch West Berkshire, including the delivery of the statutory Healthwatch functions and requirements in the service specification.

The overall responsibilities of the Healthwatch Advisory Board are to:

- Establish and safeguard vision, mission and values
- Set policy, strategy and structure
- Agree the annual work plan
- Identify areas that require further research and/or information and to set up task/finish groups to undertake the work
- Ensure accountability and compliance by
 - monitoring progress towards achieving objectives
 - seeking assurance that systems in place are robust and reliable
- Sign off the annual report to Healthwatch England

3.2 Advisory Board members

The group will be made up of a Chair, the Healthwatch West Berkshire Lead Officer, and at least two lay volunteers with appropriate knowledge and experience. Membership of the Healthwatch Board will initially be for a term of three years and will be ratified at the Healthwatch West Berkshire Board Meeting. However, the members of the Board can serve for more than one term either as a mentor to a new member, or in the same role, if there are no other applicants and they retain the support of a majority of Board Members. The size of the Board can be varied with the agreement of the Board and The Advocacy People Management Committee.

3.3 Chairperson

The Chair's primary role is to ensure that Healthwatch West Berkshire is

effective in its tasks of setting and implementing the direction and strategy. The key responsibilities are to:

- Lead the Board in ensuring that it fulfils its responsibilities for the governance, by ensuring that the Healthwatch acts in accordance with its terms of reference and by managing its activities.
- Optimise the relationship between the Healthwatch Advisory Board, Healthwatch Champions Network and staff, volunteers and stakeholders.
- Promote and represent Healthwatch West Berkshire effectively to external stakeholders.

The Chair will be elected by the Advisory Board members each year at the relevant Board Meeting closest to the anniversary of becoming Chair. The Board may wish to appoint a Vice Chair to act as a substitute for the Chair and to chair meetings that the Chair is unable to attend.

3.4 Advisory Board Meetings

The Healthwatch Advisory Board meetings will be quorate with 50% of the members attending which must include at least two lay volunteers. The group will agree by a majority consensus where possible, if this is not possible agreement will be made by a voting ballot. If after consensus and voting, a decision cannot be reached, the decision will be taken by The Advocacy People Management Team. All decisions by the Healthwatch West Berkshire Board will need final ratification by The Advocacy People Management Board, who are the accountable provider.

Meetings will be called and organised by the Chair of the Healthwatch Advisory Board and Healthwatch West Berkshire staff.

Topics for the meetings other than those agreed in the work plan will be generated by issues arising from the voices of people in West Berkshire, the Healthwatch Champions Network, a Task and Finish Group or any important local health/social care issue that may have arisen.

Members of the Healthwatch Advisory Board will decide on the frequency of meetings, and how many are to be meetings in public. However, there will be at least four meetings annually, plus 2-3 informal meetings.

The Public may submit questions to the board meeting 14 days in advance for non- agenda items and two working days for an item on the agenda. The person asking the question may do so in person, or if not present will receive a written response which will be emailed and subsequently minuted. If the question requires a more detailed response, a written response will be emailed after the meeting hopefully within 14 days following the meeting and added to the minutes.

4. Healthwatch Champions Network

4.1 Aim

The aim of the Healthwatch Champions Network is to engage directly with key stakeholders and with bodies that represent the service users, carers and the general public around key issues and developments in local services.

In addition to its key role as the Healthwatch channel of communications with their partners, the Champions Network has an advisory and consultation role with respect to Healthwatch West Berkshire's objective and service delivery.

The functions of the Healthwatch Champions Network are to:

- Provide a platform/network to promote partnership and engagement between Healthwatch West Berkshire and local voluntary organisations and community groups
- Act as a channel for Healthwatch West Berkshire in seeking views from local people on health and social care services through their local organisations or Healthwatch partners
- Make suggestions for the Healthwatch Annual Work Plan by listing all issues and concerns gathered through partners/local

organisations

- Support the Healthwatch Advisory Board in setting up the Task/Finish groups
- Help the Healthwatch Advisory Board prioritise projects/work plan by working with the Healthwatch staff at the initial research stage and in collecting supporting evidence
- Provide advice on the planning and delivery of the Healthwatch and be involved in agreeing strategic objectives, monitoring and reporting
- Share information, issues and concerns in two-way communication
- Promote personal and public involvement (PPI) at all levels
- Provide a voice for health and social care service users and the wider community to ensure that people are listening

The Healthwatch Champions Network will have membership that ensures that all key interests are represented. It is particularly important that the Champions Network represents the views of local health and social care service users and carers.

The Champions Network will review its membership as required and may co-opt others as necessary.

4.2 Chairperson

The role of the Chair is to ensure that all members are given the opportunity to express their views openly. The Chair will also be responsible for ensuring that any verbal or written submissions made by the Champions Network reflect the views of all members.

4.3 Champions Network Meetings

Meetings will be called and organised by the chair of the Champions Network and Healthwatch West Berkshire staff.

Topics for the meetings other than those agreed with the Board will be generated by issues arising from the Champions Network members. A

record of discussions and recommendations from each meeting will be submitted to the Board for consideration and action.

Members of the Champions Network will decide on the frequency of meetings; however, the aim is to hold at least four meetings annually. This may be done using virtual meetings and decisions can be agreed by majority via email.

5. Task/Finish Groups

The Healthwatch Advisory Board will set up task/finish groups to undertake specific projects and tasks in the agreed annual work plan.

Members of the task/finish groups will be the Healthwatch West Berkshire staff and self-selected from the Healthwatch Champions Network and volunteers. The group will report back regularly to the Healthwatch Lead Officer and the Advisory Board and will contribute to the Healthwatch Annual Report.

6. Code of Conduct

All those who attend Healthwatch Advisory Board Meetings will be bound by The Advocacy People's code of conduct and its policies on health and safety, equalities, safeguarding and confidentiality

Appendix

