

To: Healthwatch Surrey Board

From: Kate Scribbins, CEO

Date: April 2021

Update on Board Champion role and Special Interest Groups

Background

For the last two years we have tried an approach of allocating Board Directors to particular groups and communities at risk of health inequalities, to keep a watching brief and help the staff team stay on top of current issues.

This approach has not worked effectively for a range of reasons, despite our attempts to clarify and refine the role.

I propose that we do not continue with this attempt to cover such a broad canvas of potential inequalities and vulnerabilities in this way. Healthwatch has such a broad remit to cover that we have perhaps spread ourselves too thinly, and allocated Directors to areas with no particular deadline or output, making it hard to retain momentum in this role.

My proposed approach is that we consolidate our efforts into a smaller, more focussed set of areas which are closely aligned with our Thematic Priorities and our general work as a critical friend to engagement activity across Surrey. We cannot hope to cover all aspects of health and care and all less-well-heard groups in Surrey, so going forward we will aim to focus our efforts.

Special Interest Groups

To this end we have created a small number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs). These are:

1. **Quality of Engagement/critical friend SIG** – mainly populated by our volunteer Community Influencers, this group will specialise in maintaining and building expertise about all aspects of engagement; understanding the link between Equality Impact Assessments and insight-gathering; getting involved in being a critical friend to system engagement.
2. **Mental Health SIG** – to support our Thematic Priority around mental health services (with a focus on dementia)
3. **Care at home SIG** – to support our Thematic Priority around care at home
4. **Access to health and care SIG** – to build our expertise and understanding of the issues around the move to digital and remote care; how covid has impacted on access to care etc, and help to support project work
5. **Children's services SIG** – not a Thematic Priority at present however we have long said that we do not do enough in this area, and we have a number of volunteers who have an active interest.

Board Directors are invited to join these SIGs if they have a particular interest in this area. Please let Lisa know which group you would be interested in joining.

The number and focus of our SIGs can be reviewed annually depending on our priorities.

Other ways that Directors can help

It is also becoming increasingly apparent that we must stay closely connected to our “places”, or ICPS, in order to demonstrate our value and influence as a Healthwatch. Therefore, it is important that as many Directors as possible get involved in one of our local Volunteer Groups. This will provide a link to the issues at local level and enable Directors to stay in touch with our work. Please let Zoe know if you want to join one of our local Volunteer Groups.

Our Escalations Panel is the other way to stay in touch with our work and hear about the intelligence we are picking up on; the issues that are presenting as clusters; and cases of particular concern. We encourage Directors to come along to at least one Escalations Panel meeting per year. Please let Sam know if you would like to attend.