

## **Healthwatch Surrey: our Local Healthwatch decision-making: policy and procedures for all Staff, Volunteers and the Board**

### ***Policy Statement***

Healthwatch Surrey CIC (“**Healthwatch Surrey**”) makes its decisions in respect of our Local Healthwatch work in an open and transparent way and ensures the interests of the people of Surrey are always put first. This policy and associated procedures outline the steps taken to ensure decisions are evidence based and lead to substantive impact in the community.

The governing regulations and standards are:

- *The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012* - referred to as Regulation 40 throughout this document.
- *Freedom of Information Act 2000.*
- *Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles): “Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.”*

This policy applies to all relevant decisions made by Healthwatch Surrey in respect of our Local Healthwatch work and follows Healthwatch England’s general guidance in this area.

### ***Relevant Local Healthwatch decisions***

Regulation 40 requires Healthwatch Surrey to have in place and publish procedures for making relevant Local Healthwatch decisions. Relevant decisions include how we decide what to work on and how much resource to spend; whether to make reports and recommendations; how to use our Enter and View powers; whether to refer a matter to our Adults and Health Select Committee, and decisions about our sub-contracting.

Relevant decisions do not include day-to-day activity that may be required to carry out exploratory work prior to making a relevant decision, or day to day operational decisions.

### ***Who may make such decisions?***

The Board of Healthwatch Surrey will be responsible for making relevant decisions. The Board will have the power to delegate some of the relevant decision-making to its sub-committees/ groups/ panels or to the CEO of Healthwatch Surrey.

All relevant decisions will be appropriately recorded (including, where applicable, in minutes of the relevant Board/ committee/ group/ panel meeting at which the decision was made). The minutes of all Board Meetings in Public are published on Healthwatch Surrey’s website once they have been approved by the Board as being a correct record of such meeting.

Once a decision has been made, the staff team is responsible for implementation and delivery, with an agreed reporting process to the Board or relevant sub-committee/ group/ panel.

The Board of Healthwatch Surrey will reconsider a previous decision where new data has become available, or if circumstances change, which might prompt it to reach a different decision, or where there is evidence that this decision-making process was not followed.

As a Community Interest Company, decision-making within Healthwatch Surrey is also governed by our constitutional documents.

In particular:

- The Board will approve our Local Healthwatch annual work plan and associated budget, including any material decisions about sub-contracting.
- The Board will approve quarterly reviews of the Local Healthwatch budget position, and mid-year reforecast.
- The Board will approve key strategies in respect of our Local Healthwatch work, including our Community Engagement strategy, Volunteering strategy and Communications strategy.
- The Board will approve decisions about which Thematic Priorities we will work on under our Local Healthwatch contract.
- Our Escalations Panel, made up of certain members of staff and Directors and with input from volunteers, will help advise the CEO on which issues should be escalated and, where appropriate, use of our Local Healthwatch powers to do this. The CEO will keep the Board informed and involve them in significant escalations.
- Project findings and associated recommendations will be a matter for the staff team and are reported to the Board.

Appendix 1 to this policy sets out a scheme of delegation for our key decisions.

### ***Involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions***

Healthwatch Surrey's Board is composed solely of lay persons (a person who is not a health or social care professional) and volunteers (a person who is not a paid employee of Healthwatch Surrey). Healthwatch Surrey intends to secure broad based views on its activities wherever possible, and involves others, particularly lay people and volunteers, in its decision making.

### ***How are decisions made?***

The potential scope of the work of Healthwatch Surrey is vast - it has an overview of health and social care services for all adults, children and young people in Surrey, including those who are most vulnerable or may be excluded. Given limited resources, this means we must prioritise the issues we focus on. The main sources to inform our work programme are likely to come from:

- People's experiences of health and social care services that they share with us.
- Evidence we proactively collect about specific areas of concern through the stories and enquiries we hear directly, including deliberative research, public surveys and polls.
- National and local data sets that evidence issues affecting large numbers of the local population and the most excluded.

This list is not exhaustive and other relevant sources of data will be considered.

In order to prioritise, Healthwatch Surrey's Board will carefully consider all sources of information and decide where it can add most value. Areas to be considered include (but are not limited to):

- That the issues fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Surrey delivers to its statutory remit.
- How much the issue matters to local people: it must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people in health and social care.
- How much change Healthwatch Surrey can realistically bring about. This enables us to make sure we are choosing areas where we can have the greatest impact. This is important to deliver the greatest return for our budget, maintain our independence and ensure we bring issues to the attention of the health and care system.

- Does the influence to change need to come from Healthwatch Surrey i.e. so we are not focusing on things that others can do more easily and effectively?
- Finally, the Board of Healthwatch Surrey will consider our work as a full set of priorities, as together they need to have the greatest impact for people using health and social care services.

Healthwatch Surrey holds quarterly Board Meetings in public, and minutes recording relevant decisions will be available on our website.

### ***Dealing with breaches of any procedure referred to in this policy document, including circumstances in which a breach would be referred to the local authority***

If a decision is taken in the name of Healthwatch Surrey without appropriate authorisation in the manner set out in this policy document, the Board will determine what action is needed. This may be to either approve the decision retrospectively by ratifying it, or to change the decision.

If a breach of the agreed procedure is considered to have also breached the associated Local Healthwatch commissioning contract, it will be reported to the relevant Local Authority and further action agreed between the Local Authority and Healthwatch Surrey, as governed by such commissioning contract.

### ***Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement***

Healthwatch Surrey is committed to ensuring all decisions made are free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Healthwatch Surrey will monitor this policy, in conjunction with its own G&I Policy, in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

### **Review of this policy document**

The Board of Healthwatch Surrey will review the effectiveness of the decision-making policy and procedures set out in this document every year. Any amendments to this policy and the procedures governing the making of relevant decisions will require a simple majority of board members voting in favour. The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch Surrey as soon as is practicable after approval.

### **Procedures**

Healthwatch Surrey undertakes to carry out the following procedures in respect of this policy:

- Publish Healthwatch Surrey's most up to date policy document on Healthwatch Surrey's website.
- Review and obtain Board approval to Healthwatch Surrey's decision-making policy every year.
- Ensure all of our staff are familiar with the policy and refresh their understanding and awareness of the need for open and transparent decision making by reading the policy on a regular basis, at a minimum after review by the Board.
- Publish minutes from Board Meetings in Public where relevant Local Healthwatch decisions are made in a timely manner on our website.

## Appendix 1

### *Scheme of delegation for Healthwatch Surrey's Local Healthwatch decision-making*

Item	Responsibility
Finance and personnel issues	Finance & Personnel Committee (“FPC”) recommends to the Board for approval other than on specific issues delegated to the FPC by the Board
Priorities	Priorities Advisory Group recommends to the Board for approval
CONCs [ <i>Concerning Cases</i> ] and clusters - escalating	Operational decision by staff team; Escalations Panel informed
Escalating concerns to system level	Operational decision by staff team with advice and input from Escalations Panel; CEO keeps Board informed
Escalating concerns to Local Authority Select Committee	Escalations Panel advises CEO who makes the decision and keeps Board informed
Recommendations arising from projects	Operational decision by staff team and reported to the Board
Use of Enter and View powers	Policy approved by Board; operational decisions made by staff team; Escalations Panel advise when Enter and View is required to gather insight.

Decision making policy and procedures	
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