

Healthwatch Advisory Group bulletin

Issue 6

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Introduction

Healthwatch will be the new consumer champion for both health and adult social care. It will exist in two distinct forms – local Healthwatch, at local level, and Healthwatch England, at national level.

This is the regular bulletin from the Healthwatch advisory group. It contains up to date, authoritative information on Healthwatch developments.

Feel free to use the content in your publications to keep your stakeholders and members informed about Healthwatch.

News

Funding announced for local development

In the next financial year (2012/13) an additional £3.2m will be made available to local authorities to establish local Healthwatch. This additional money is for start up costs in setting up local Healthwatch and includes costs such as staff recruitment/training, office set up costs, and publicity.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, local authorities will need to continue to provide a Local Involvement Network (LiNK) and funding for this continues to be allocated as part of the local government Formula Grant in 2012/13 and the £3.2m will be in addition to this.

Each Healthwatch pathfinder area is receiving funding of £5,000, paid in February 2012. This money can be used in any part of their development. This could include spreading best practice, engaging more in the community, and financially supporting volunteers.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_132020.pdf

Action learning sets – support for LiNKs

The Department of Health is working with a consortium of its strategic partners to run a series of learning sets for LiNKs members over the next few months. The aim of the learning is to share and embed best practice across all LiNKs in the transition to Healthwatch; and to ensure priority learning and development needs are addressed across all LiNKs, including leadership, engagement, influencing and representation, and embedding equality and diversity across the work.

This support is part of the Government's commitment to the dedicated volunteers who are already involved in LINks. Bringing their experience and enthusiasm into local Healthwatch is important. In combination with other developments, this should create the strongest possible foundation for local HealthWatch, building on existing good practice as well as providing opportunities to learn what can be done better and how.

<http://www.regionalvoices.net/2012/01/free-learning-events-for-links-members/>

Implementation project – support for local authorities

In recognition of the critical leadership role that local government now has in establishing effective local Healthwatch organisations within their communities, the Local Government Association has established a new Healthwatch implementation programme. As part of this programme, the Department of Health is sponsoring the Local Government Association, Regional Voices and the NHS Institute to support local authorities and their delivery partners to continue to develop local Healthwatch. The project is carrying out a 'snap survey' of pathfinder local authorities, to get a picture of progress to date and future development plans.

Consulting on regulations for Healthwatch England

Stakeholders and the public are being asked to contribute to the development of the Healthwatch England membership regulations.

This consultation asks questions on the key issues in relation to the membership of Healthwatch England that the Department has heard from stakeholders.

[Consultation on the regulations for Healthwatch England Membership](#)

The deadline for comments is Friday 2 March.

Key themes

We are continuing to develop ideas on how Healthwatch will operate. Our current focus is on:

Information

A recent workshop on the information function for local Healthwatch identified a range of key issues for future planning, including:

- successful signposting depends on having good relationships with your statutory partners (knowing who to go to in e.g. the council, the PCT/CCG, NHS trust, PALS etc.)

- the importance of Healthwatch being fully networked into what's already there – accessing information through networks (including libraries, voluntary sector organisations and community groups for example)
- there needs to be a “transition plan” for the handover of the information signposting knowledge from PCT PALS to local Healthwatch
- the importance of training and support for staff
- individuals may need different levels of support depending (signposting may be appropriate for some individuals whereas others may require a more formal referral)
- the importance of having a recording system that the staff and the volunteers are happy with.

These and other issues will be followed up in a small working group over the next few months, to develop some material to help people who are planning Healthwatch locally.

What's coming next

We are holding further workshops on communication, on how Healthwatch will influence specialised commissioning, and on how Healthwatch can engage with the whole community including people in secure settings and people in temporary accommodation. This work complements the learning coming from Pathfinder areas.

How to get involved in developing HealthWatch

To support the set up Healthwatch the Department of Health has a programme board and an advisory group. New members have recently been recruited to the programme board, to strengthen the input from local government and from the voluntary and community sector. To read more about these groups and to read the minutes of the meetings please visit the CQC [website](#).

To ensure people can feed in their views on the development of HealthWatch an online community has been set up for anyone who is interested to feed in their views. If you would like to join the community please email healthwatch@nunwood.com.

If you would like to find out more about the NHS modernisation programme, please visit the DH website at: <http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk>.

You can also find discussion on setting up Healthwatch on the National Learning Network for Health and Wellbeing Boards, which is on the Local Government Association's Communities of Practice site: www.communities.idea.gov.uk.

If you have queries on this bulletin, please contact healthwatch@dh.gsi.gov.uk.