

HealthWatch Advisory Group bulletin

Issue 3

October 2011

Introduction

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.

Newsflash

The House of Lords is debating the Health and Social Care Bill. The second reading is on 11 October, to be followed by committee sessions, looking at the detail. You can follow the progress of the legislation at

www.parliament.uk/bills/2010-1/healthandsocialcare.html

Background to HealthWatch

To strengthen the collective voice of patients and carers in the system at both a local and national level Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will evolve to become Local HealthWatch and HealthWatch England will be set up as the independent consumer champion within the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Local HealthWatch key issues

Some reminders of what LINKs need to be thinking about

The aim should be to ensure continuity between the work of the LINK and the work of local HealthWatch BUT:

- LINKs need to be involved with their local authorities now, talking about the sorts of organisation they want the local HealthWatch to be.
- There's no automatic rite of passage for the LINK to become a local HealthWatch organisation; local authorities have freedom to choose what is best for their area when they commission a local HealthWatch.
- Local HealthWatch will be a 'body corporate', so LINKs members need to be thinking about if and how they become a 'body corporate'.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has carried out a review of LINKs. They say: We believe that the evidence we have gathered provides an extensive and credible picture of the development of LINKs and of the lessons from their first three years of existence – these could contribute to the development of local Healthwatch." You can download

a copy of the initial messages from the review (“Smoothing the Way”) at www.cfps.org.uk/news

HealthWatch England key issues

Work to create HealthWatch England is gathering pace. A work plan, outlining key activity leading to the set-up of HealthWatch England, will be published in mid-October. CQC's board meeting in September considered an outline operating model, including budget proposals. Background work to make sure that HealthWatch England has the systems it needs (website, data management etc) is already underway. The role of the Chair of the HealthWatch England committee will be advertised in November. The aim is that they take up post as a member of CQC's Board and Chair-designate of HealthWatch in April 2012. Final plans for HealthWatch England will be agreed with the Chair. Discussions are starting about the composition of the HealthWatch England committee. There will be consultation on regulations about the committee early in 2012.

Although HealthWatch England is new, it will build on the existing relationships between CQC and LINKs. Part of our planning is to set out the relationships between local HealthWatch, local CQC staff, HealthWatch England and CQC's leadership. Further work to develop these and other relationships, with the NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor and with local authorities, will take place over the coming months.

Summary of discussions from HealthWatch advisory group sub groups

The HealthWatch advisory group has set up five task and finish groups to focus on specific areas of the work programme. They are listed below, with a summary of what they have been working on. When these finish their work, others will be set up. These views, and others, as they emerge, will help to shape the plans for HealthWatch.

HealthWatch England Principles and Practicalities

The group has been acting as a sounding board on HealthWatch England development. It has provided views on the job descriptions of both the chair and director, as well as commenting on the proposed operating model for HealthWatch England.

Sally Brearley (group chair)

Local HealthWatch: Building a convincing case

Three critical relationships have been identified for development:

- a) Local HealthWatch and HealthWatch England
- b) Local HealthWatch and CQC
- c) Local HealthWatch and its commissioners i.e. local authorities

The realities of pathfinders will need to be taken on board in ensuring the end objective is achievable.

Melvyn Sandler (group chair)

Local HealthWatch: Creating a good local HealthWatch

- Key dates for finance within local authorities (Nov/Dec 2011 (LA grant settlement) and March 2012 (LA budgets set)).
- TUPE issues will be locally resolved, not nationally adjudicated.
- Pathfinders: The Department of Health will provide the networking for them. The analysis of their bids is not yet completed. Expect main emerging themes to be governance and diversity. Pathfinders have a dedicated space on the Department of Health website.
- Regional transitional leads have their full start-up briefing on 29th September, after which their contact details will be available.

Ruth Marsden (group chair)

(these two local HealthWatch groups have now merged)

Communication and engagement: a strategy

Work continues with the communications agency, Spencer du Bois; we have a timeline for development. A key output will be a communications 'toolkit' for local HealthWatch, to be ready in June 2012. We hope that all local HealthWatch organisations will use the collectively developed identity for HealthWatch and we hope this will help to give HealthWatch a distinctive voice.

Sharing an approach like this will help local HealthWatch to gain from some centrally supported awareness raising. It will also provide highly cost effective tools such as a logo, templates for leaflets and so on, that will save work locally. So, in advance of the final HealthWatch "brand" being shared next year, we suggest that pathfinders and Local Involvement Networks do not develop individual transitional logos or other branded materials. We plan to hold conferences on this work locally early next year. More information about these events will be available on the HealthWatch online community in the next few months. If you would like to join the community please email healthwatch@nunwood.com.

We will also be holding our next live web chat on the online community on Tuesday 25 October from 10am – 11:30am. Members of the HealthWatch team will be online to answer your questions during this time. We hope you will be able to join us.

Frances Hasler (group chair)

How to get involved in developing HealthWatch

To set up HealthWatch the Care Quality Commission and the Department of Health have set up a joint programme. This is made up of a programme board and an advisory group. 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 haven't already noted your interest in joining, and you would like to, please email enquiries.healthwatch@cqc.org.uk

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

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