



Reading Borough Council
and
Wokingham Borough Council

Functions of Local Healthwatch Service

The functions of a local Healthwatch was published by the Department of Health on the 5 March 2012 to assist planning for local Healthwatch.

Reading and Wokingham Borough Council expect Healthwatch Reading and Wokingham to exercise these functions.

Function 1: Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services.

If it is to promote the involvement of local people in decisions about health and care provision, the local Healthwatch will need to be completely independent and be able to demonstrate its credibility, knowledge and successes. It will/will be:

- Actively engage the local community, taking into account the demographics and population health, wellbeing and care needs of both Reading and Wokingham; including but not limited to hard to reach groups, through an on-going community engagement programme. This will include but not be limited to: participating in community events; holding own dedicated events; conducting surveys, focus groups, interviews, observations, workshops and outreach to gather views and understand the experiences of patients, service users and carers; and making these views known to improve the quality of services.
- Easy to reach and inclusive of all groups within the local community
- Support and influence others to ensure that their processes for consulting and engaging the public work well
- Provide advice on effective engagement, including on ways to improve accessibility and readability.
- Support commissioners or providers to run public events when relevant.
- Develop strong relationships with the Reading and Wokingham Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- Contribute knowledge effectively to the Reading and Wokingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessments

Function 2: Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care

services could and ought to be improved.

- Make best use of a range of stakeholder engagement techniques to maximise opportunities for local people to have their say
- Provide people with information on accessing local complaints services, including advocacy support to use those services, when health and social care services fall short of expectations.
- Provide mechanisms for people to provide their views, including but not limited to: drop in sessions, feedback forms, comment cards, social media and websites

Function 3: Obtaining the views of local people regarding their needs for, and experiences of, local care services and, importantly, supporting people to make these views known:

Healthwatch Reading and Wokingham will achieve this in a number of ways:

- Undertake on-going formal and informal engagement with all sections of the Reading and Wokingham population (including those who are not usually heard) to capture public opinion, experience and aspirations for health and social care
- Actively seeking the views of those in Reading and Wokingham who do not generally come forward, taking into account local demographics.
- Provide a range of mechanisms for people to provide their views, including but not limited to: drop in sessions, feedback forms, comment cards, social media and websites.
- Target engagement activity in culturally appropriate ways and demonstrate cultural competence
- Champion the consumer voice on the local Health and Wellbeing Boards and, in their capacity as a statutory member of those Boards, collaborate with other Board members in overseeing the development of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS).
- Developing and utilising skills to understand, interpret and communicate different kinds of data and information
- Actively participate in relevant patient and public involvements groups to support the public voice. Engage in relevant committees and meetings to enable the local Healthwatch to raise issues at the appropriate level.

Function 4: Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and provider of care services and shared with Healthwatch England (HWE)

It is expected that a timely two way communication flow will be established and maintained between Healthwatch Reading and Wokingham and HWE.

- Have robust processes for keeping HWE up to date with local issues and concerns
- Inform HWE of local matters that are relevant to wider Health, care and wellbeing agendas.
- Act on feedback received from Healthwatch England

Function 5: Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services:

- Identify what information already exists and how to access it - Maintain a comprehensive working knowledge of health and social care provision and news across the Boroughs
- Lead on the development and delivery of Communications and Marketing activity and materials for the Local Healthwatch service including, website, brochures, press and media, social networking, conferences and events.
- Support people to make informed choices by providing clear, up-to-date and impartial advice and information to the public about access to local health and social care services in the Reading and Wokingham areas
- Ensure and support people to be able to access information in a range of different formats
- Record details of sign-posting or referrals for information and/or advice about health and social care services. Monitor this data to help detect patterns or emerging issues that may require further investigation.

Function 6: Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved; and sharing these views with Healthwatch England

- Analyse customer insight data from NHS Providers, commissioners, the local authorities and local providers including but not limited to G.P. Survey results, public feedback websites like patient opinion and NHS Choices and local and national media stories, intelligence from local voluntary and community organisations.
- Encourage high standards of health and care provision and challenge poor services.
- Be aware of the statutory powers the Local Healthwatch has over providers, such as the power to demand a response, and explain and clarify how these may be used.

Function 7: Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission to conduct special reviews or investigations, and making recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about particular issues

- Produce reports that will give an overview of public views and provider performance in the Reading and Wokingham areas and assist in the prioritisation of issues.
- Encourage high standards of health and care provision and challenge poor services.
- Comply with and publish a procedure for making decisions about who may be an authorised representative to Enter and View provider premises to observe matters relating to health and social care services.
- Alert Healthwatch England or CQC and the Councils, where appropriate, to concerns about specific care providers, health or social care matters
- Recommend the undertaking of investigations or special service reviews to Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about particular issues
- Maintain appropriate working relationships with Healthwatch England, including developing mechanisms for the Local Healthwatch to escalate issues directly with Healthwatch England as appropriate (or where appropriate directly to the CQC).

Function 8: Providing Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively

Supporting effective engagement

The Provider will be an authority on best practice in consumer engagement and as such may be called upon by local commissioners or providers to advise on effective and appropriate approaches, or to support engagement exercises. The Provider may offer such advice or support, provided always that it does not accept, or give the appearance of accepting, responsibility to meet other organisations' duties to consult on their behalf. The Provider will not quality assure engagement exercises conducted by other organisations as those organisations remain ultimately responsible for their own engagement activity.

Subject to the above, the Provider will:

- Use best practice in forming and conduction consultation.
- Support and influence others to ensure that their processes for consulting and engaging the public work well
- Encourage different, related local engagement efforts to be more joined up
- Promote and support best practice engagement
- Provide advice on effective engagement, including on ways to improve accessibility and readability.
- Support commissioners or providers to run public events when relevant.
- Challenge deadlines around local consultations if appropriate to facilitate appropriate engagement with the public.