

## HEALTHWATCH CONSULTATION TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

27 February 2014  
2.00pm Committee Room 2, Town Hall

**PRESENT** - Councillor Newall (in the Chair).

**HealthWatch –**

Board Members – Bonnie Davies, Ian Groves and Michelle Thompson.  
Development Officer, Diane Lax.

Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

**Apologies** – Councillors Macnab, S Richmond, T Richmond and J Taylor.

Healthwatch (HW) advised that the Group's views were sought on the consultation document Healthwatch England, The Way Forward although stressed that not all the content was necessarily relevant to Darlington. Comments on the document were required by 10 March 2014. The document highlighted the following four main areas of work in HWs plans –

- Safer services;
- Rights and things we all should do;
- Make sure services meet the needs of the people; and
- Make Healthwatch stronger.

A member of HW had attended several HW North East meetings at which the consensus of opinion was that the document was clearly written with minimum jargon, it was well set out and accessible to all. It was also stated that all HW's were at different stages of completion.

HW declared that it was considered that local North East HW's had had very little support from HW England, the nearest consultation meeting attended by it being Manchester. It was considered that if HW England had travelled further north a wider viewpoint would have been obtained.

Discussion ensued around the use of the word 'consumer', which was well received by younger people, as opposed to 'friend' or 'user', in place of 'patient'.

Details were given on the network, HW Hub, whereby HWs utilised the customer relations management system (CRM) which was accessed by HW England to collate data and identify trends.

It was stated that there were twelve north east HWs and many of those were incorporated into local authorities although there were different systems around the UK.

Darlington HW was a social enterprise as it was independent and some HWs were run by the Carers Association. It was confirmed that HW Darlington had received all its allocated funding for a two year contract.

HW advised HW England had focussed on complaints last year but as HW had to remain impartial any complaints were and the complainant signposted to the relevant body/authority.

The focus of the meeting turned to the questions contained in the Healthwatch Consultation document 'The Way Forward - Our plans for the future, people's rights and the things they should do' and the following comments and observations were made. In relation to people's rights it was agreed that everyone had the right to choose and be listened to. With regard to the proper use of health and care services consumers needed to be aware of the effect of not cancelling or double-booking appointments and making better use of A&E departments and pharmacies.

To ensure that consumers know about their rights and services HWs all had the same branding, colours and templates and worked with many partners to get the message across. It was stressed that people had the right to complain if they didn't like something and that the younger generation were better at speaking out. Good service, however, promoted good reputations and reference was made to a national awareness campaign to promote Healthwatch and its services. It was suggested that some organisations saw data collection as a hassle although feedback was important to ensure the service provided was efficient and effective.

Although local HWs were important to local people it was felt that HW England should take responsibility for promoting Healthwatch overall.

Concerns were also expressed regarding confidentiality of patients' records and security of surveys and it was noted that some GP's were reluctant to share information due to confidentiality issues.

It was stated that advertising and a National Campaign would help local HWs get even better and that by 1 April all HWs had to be a social enterprise. It was considered that set guidelines and structures should have been provided from the outset as variations could have been managed. Although some HWs had up to 13 Board Members Darlington had four, it was felt that the larger the Board the more difficult it was to make decisions and get everybody together at the same time. It was suggested that a better way forward was to establish Focus Groups to concentrate on various aspects. Board Members advised they were extremely proud to be the first HW in the north-east to float as a social enterprise and that more people could be involved in HW as it evolved

It was confirmed by the Board that Healthwatch brought together social and health care and it that worked well then HW had achieved its goals.

The Board again reiterated that, although HW England needed to be proactive further north than Manchester, HW Darlington was working extremely well and had achieved establishing itself as a social enterprise with no outside assistance. Each Board Member was dedicated and committed and brought a different element of expertise.

**IT WAS AGREED** – (a) That the thanks of this Group be extended to the Board and Development Officer for their attendance.

(b) That the views expressed by this Group be forwarded as part of the ‘Healthwatch: The Way Forward’ consultation document.

DRAFT