

SUNDERLAND HEALTHWATCH

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive a presentation about the role of Sunderland Healthwatch.
- 1.2 Representatives of Healthwatch, including the recently appointed Chair Kevin Morris, will be in attendance at the meeting to provide Members with information and progress.

2. Background Information

2.1 Healthwatch was created by Part 5 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which introduced a national body (Healthwatch England), and a local organisation for each local council in England with social care responsibilities (local Healthwatch).

2.2 Healthwatch is intended to strengthen the collective voice of users of health and social care services and members of the public, both nationally and locally. Locally, it has additional powers than those held by the former Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), which it has replaced.

2.3 Local Healthwatches will be a strong, independent consumer champion that:

- Strengthen the collective voice of citizens and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs;
- Support people to find the right health and social care services by providing appropriate information, and signposting;

Provide people with information about what they can do when things go wrong or if they have a complaint about NHS services signposting people to the local complaints advocacy service;

- Have powers to request information from commissioners and providers of health and social care and to enter health and social care premises.
- Have a seat on the local statutory Health and wellbeing board. In this way local Healthwatch actively participates in local decision making;

- Have the power to enter and view premises providing publicly-funded care services as part of its role in gathering evidence;
- Is able to alert Healthwatch England, or the Care Quality Commission where appropriate, to specific care providers, health or social care matters; and
- Has a duty to produce an annual report on their activities and finance and send a copy of their annual reports to key bodies.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Healthwatch Sunderland has now started working with local people and has a growing membership of patients, service users, carers, community groups, organisations, service providers and commissioners to get the best out of local health and social care services.
- 3.2 The Chair (Kevin Morris) and Vice Chair (Lesley Ann Sutherland) have now been appointed and will support the appointment process of the Healthwatch Executive Board and finalise a work plan.
- 3.3 Consideration should be given as to how the council's scrutiny function can work with Healthwatch Sunderland in the most effective way to increase local accountability and get the best outcomes for the residents of Sunderland.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to receive and note the presentation, giving consideration to the role of Healthwatch and future relationships with the scrutiny function.

5. Background Papers

Establishing Local Healthwatch (LGA, 2012)

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