

## Helping Research Work for Healthwatch Cambridgeshire

### Purpose

1. This report sets a preliminary agenda for Healthwatch to develop links with people involved in research on health and social care in Cambridgeshire.

### Key issues

2. The basis for engagement with research communities is for the following interests:
  - How to do our role - the most effective methods to listen and engage.
  - Improvement of the experience evidence base - the quality and quantity of what we know from information on experience.
  - How to encourage evidence based clinical and care practice that also achieves positive impacts on people's experience.
3. High level areas for action are suggested in paragraph 22.

### Action required by the Board

4. The Board is asked to:
  - Approve the basis for our interest in research.
  - Comment on the next steps, in the context of the forthcoming refresh of the strategic plan and annual work programme.

### Author

Val Moore, Chair

16 March 2016

### Why think about research?

5. To fulfil our objectives as set out in the Regulations, Health & Social Care Act 2012, Healthwatch needs to do the following with full trust and confidence of the public, service commissioners and providers:
  - Obtain the views of local people regarding their needs for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known.
  - Provide advice and information about access to local care services.
  - Formulate views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved.
  
6. Due regard to the research evidence base on effectiveness and the appropriate use of user experience data should be a strong part of the Healthwatch methodology.

### How to listen and engage effectively?

7. Undertaking this role well requires knowledge from a wide range of disciplines such as social and behaviour sciences, communications, management studies and systems development, as well as from public health, clinical effectiveness and health and social care systems research.

#### *Keeping on top of the methodological evidence base*

8. Our current practice is based on known conventions for public engagement and its assumed value and place of importance within the current health and care policy frameworks. There is increasing evidence for the benefits of public involvement at the population and individual levels towards positive outcomes, but new information is often fragmented and dispersed.
  
9. Healthwatch does not have the capacity to search and synthesise across all publications but should naturally encourage appropriate understanding of this information for its staff and volunteers. We have the potential therefore to informally and formally promote this to local partner organisations through our advice and activities. Building specialist capacity to maintain a robust approach will inevitably be a slow process, targeting specific academic experience in our volunteers and trustees over time, and through investing in staff development.

#### *Tapping into the knowledge of experts*

10. Building internal capacity as described above will only go so far. It is important therefore to keep in touch with local experts and researchers, as well as national trusted sources of information, to identify key summaries to inform practice. The annual external meetings plan should include research informants for this purpose, and key conferences or forums will inevitably be identified as a result of these relationships.
11. To be achievable, the initial targets for meetings could include people with a lead in research from our healthcare trusts and County Council (including the public health team), the two universities, the East of England region Academic Health Science Network and its collaboration for applied health research, known as the CLAHRC.
12. Healthwatch has a logical role to capture and highlight important new findings from research on how to listen and engage effectively and its proven benefits. Useful high level sources and summary documents could in future be displayed on the website as part of its routine update and development, and used practically in projects or events central to our work programme.

### **What do we know about people's experience of health and social care services in Cambridgeshire?**

#### *How we gather and use evidence of experience*

13. Experiences are gathered by Healthwatch in a number of ways. These include unprompted contacts from the public, attending public meetings and engagement events, calls for evidence on a particular trust or service and occasional survey or focus group research.
14. The effective storage, collation, and exploration of this data is being improved through the developing Healthwatch customer relationship management system (CRM), and through the Feedback Centre proposal.
15. Research expertise could enhance our strategies for listening, engaging and challenge. More rigour applied to data gathering, data extraction and use of granular information to address particular questions of interest will help maintain our credibility and impact. When we provide summaries of what we know at meetings or publish a report, we need to be confident we are providing clear and accurate data including any limitations on the strength of the findings.

#### *Partners in the generation and use of evidence of experience*

16. We should increasingly be aware of, and able to reference, studies being undertaken by Trusts and academic groups where local people are participants in the research. The benefits for partners in this process include:

- Healthwatch may suggest topics to explore, or questions we see the need to find answers to through research.
- We may be able to suggest local groups or communities willing to participate in or promote the research.
- Healthwatch may partner an organisation in a bid or to undertake research in a high priority area.
- Collaboration on disseminating mutually relevant findings and encouraging action and impact.

### **Supporting adoption of evidence of effectiveness and its impact in practice**

#### *Championing the evidence for effective practice*

17. As well as bringing feedback on experience from local people, our views on the standards of local service quality should be informed by evidence of which we can be confident about. On behalf of the collective patient/ service user, Healthwatch can ask how national evidence based guidance is being taken into account during local decision making. By promoting its use in local pathway development, in tandem with user participation, Healthwatch can champion the importance of understanding acceptability of service changes in context.

18. When individuals contact us about concerns, Healthwatch encourages people to be aware of the standards of care set out, and to use the accompanying public information resources. We can ask specific questions to providers on their behalf. We did this recently in response to the treatment of 'tongue-tie' in infants.

#### *Dissemination, good practice adoption and learning*

19. Practitioners and managers in our health and local care system deserve to be encouraged and congratulated on their use of patient and service user experiences to inform and implement change.

20. A higher profile for these examples showing systematic approaches to change and evaluation will be of value to researchers, local communities and of course our health and social care partners. Researchers often want to disseminate findings at the practitioner level, which is complementary to

Healthwatch networks of community organisations on one hand and our strategic position within the local system on the other.

### Next steps

21. Capacity to move at pace is currently limited, and subject to strategic review. The following steps build on existing strengths to build our capability and contribution to research:

- Further develop the Involve and Learn page on the website to more distinctly display and attract key information on effective working.
- List known stakeholders, informants and key projects as a foundation for a more comprehensive engagement plan as capacity allows.
- Continue to promote opportunities through our networks to participate in research, and support or partner selected projects that most meet our priorities.