

Frequently asked questions

Why are you merging?

Our two Boards are merging, so that we can provide a stronger and more effective Healthwatch service to local people.

We are funded by public money. We think we will save money and provide a more joined up service if we are one organisation.

How has this decision been made?

Our two Boards have been looking closely at how we could work better together, since the autumn of 2016.

Jointly, we undertook a full analysis of all the different options for ways of working in the future. As part of this, we talked to local people, the organisations we work with, our staff and our volunteers. A consultant has helped us with this work.

Both of our Boards made the decision to ask our respective funders if we could combine into one Healthwatch.

We had final confirmation at the beginning of March that both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council were happy with our proposal.

Why did you need local authority approval?

Each local Healthwatch is commissioned by their local authority from money provided by the Department of Health. It is the statutory duty of the local authority to fund a Healthwatch in their local area.

Both the councils make the decision about how they want to plan and pay for their local Healthwatch. This is called commissioning. We needed both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council to confirm that they were happy to commission a joint Healthwatch.

How will this happen?

The Healthwatch Cambridgeshire Board will update their Memorandum and Articles of Association so that the organisation will provide the statutory functions of a Healthwatch in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. They will do this at their Board meeting on 15th March 2017. This meeting is open to the public and anyone can attend.

What will happen to Healthwatch Peterborough?

The current Board of Healthwatch Peterborough have made the decision to close their Community Interest Company.

Their funding and property will become part of the newly combined Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as of 1st April 2017.

The Non-Executive Directors of both Healthwatch have been invited to join the newly combined Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board. This will be as a continuation of their existing term of office on the Boards of either Healthwatch Cambridgeshire or Healthwatch Peterborough. Our Non-Executives serve for three years, with an option to extend for a further three years.

All our Non-Executives have already met twice as a Shadow Board, to make decisions about our future. These were meetings in private.

From April 2017, all future meetings will be in public.

Will there be any changes to staff?

In the short term, there are no plans to change any of the staff. Healthwatch Peterborough staff will move across to the Combined Healthwatch using the statutory Transfer of Undertakings legal process.

Combining both Healthwatch will give us more money to spend on being Healthwatch.

Our service strength is in our staff and volunteers. We think that more money will allow us to provide better long-term security for staff members who are currently on short-term contracts.

We will be talking to all staff and working with them to re-plan our staffing. This means that some people's roles may change.

Will there be any funding cuts?

There will be no budget cuts. Both commissioners have confirmed there is no intention to reduce funds.

One thing that came out of the review was how highly valued both our local Healthwatch are to those who have worked with us or been helped by us. But staying as separate organisations cost more. We can save money by combining, so have more to spend on staff time.

How will the merger affect me as a volunteer?

As of 1st April, you will still be supported by the same staff that currently support you. We will not expect you to travel a long way to volunteer outside of your local area, unless you want to.

We will continue to pay out-of-pocket volunteer expenses to all volunteers in line with the current Healthwatch Cambridgeshire volunteering policy. [You can read this on Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's website here](#) or call **01480 420628** for a copy.

In the future, we will be working on a joint volunteering policy and approach to volunteering across the combined Healthwatch and will need your help to do this. We will let you know more about this as the plans develop.

Will there still be an office in Peterborough?

Yes, we are currently moving offices but will have an office base in Peterborough after the move.

Will there still be monthly public meetings in Peterborough?

Both Healthwatch will continue with their current planned activities for the first few months. This includes regular public meetings in Peterborough.

As a combined Healthwatch for the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, we will need your help to develop our long-term plan for the best way to listen to and involve people from across the whole area.

If you have any questions, please do talk to us. You can contact us in the following ways:

- Healthwatch Cambridgeshire. Call 01480 420628 or email enquiries@healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk
- Healthwatch Peterborough. Call 03451 20 20 64 or email info@healthwatchpeterborough.co.uk