Communications Report

September 2019 to August 2020

Purpose

1.   This report is an overview of communications activities undertaken during the last 12 months to support the promotion of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough. Data included is from the period 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020.

Key issues

2.   This has been a year of two halves, divided by the coronavirus pandemic. Our communications switched focus during the pandemic to support our system, our people and our communities, particularly in the initial phases.

3.   Supported key Healthwatch activities including the publication of reports, the promotion of events and the development of integrated campaign activities to engage local people.

4.   Completed a four-month project to redevelop our two local Healthwatch websites was competed in early April 2020 and greatly enhanced the organisation's ability to deliver services digitally.

5.   Continue to develop a positive relationship with local stakeholders, including media organisations, to increase the number of earned media opportunities we achieve, e.g. articles in local papers, on the radio and in voluntary and community sector partner publications.

Action required by the Board

6. The Board is asked to:
     • Note the report.

Author

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Campaigns and promotion

7. This period has been split into two distinct halves, with the focus on the period from September to early March on activities such as our Community Values Panel, End of life report and our five-year strategy.

8. In the period from mid-March until the end of August, our communications focus shifted more towards responding to the initial phases of the pandemic and redeveloping our approach to delivering Healthwatch. Our initial focus was ensuring people were directed towards accurate up to date information to help them stay safe during the pandemic.

9. During this second period, we published the annual report, including an easy read version, and promoted our restarted online public meetings.

10. **Covid-19 survey** – we developed a survey to find out how the pandemic was affecting people's experiences of health and care and have supported the publication of three briefings.

Digital - websites

11. Delivered a successful project to redevelop the two Healthwatch websites using the bespoke Healthwatch England website template which our Healthwatch supported the development of. This implementation phase of the project took four months and involved an analysis of all the content on the old sites and a page by page re-write. We moved across all reports and significant news stories from each local Healthwatch's history. Began project in December 2019 and the final site launched on 2 April 2020.

12. The new sites offer more functionality, we can showcase our work more effectively, they are easier for people to navigate and better at encouraging people to share their views. Both sites are optimised for mobile – i.e. information resizes and displays clearly on a mobile phone screen – meet W3C AA standards for accessibility and there is information about how to use specific access features on each site.

13. Since the start of April when both new sites were live, we have seen a 37% increase in people using the new Healthwatch Cambridgeshire site and 105% increase in people using the Healthwatch Peterborough site, when compared to the same period from the year before.

14. People are staying on each site longer, visiting more pages, and crucially are using it to share their experiences, with more than 1,200 experiences shared via our website since the beginning of April.

Website users

15. Although men and young people are currently under-represented in the number of feedback experiences we receive, they are visiting our site and accessing our information resources. Our data shows 27% of people on the Peterborough site and 24% on the Cambridgeshire site are aged 25-34. Between 10-11% of visitors are aged 18-24.

16. Around 40% of our website visitors are male, although they are much less likely to share their experiences than female visitors. However, this creates an opportunity for us to look at creating content that supports their needs more effectively and encourages them to share their experiences with us.

Digital – social media

17. Our research shows 66% of local people use one or more social networking site and we continue to use social media and messaging apps to listen to people, provide information and advice resources, and to deliver Healthwatch services to digitally connected people. We aim to raise awareness of Healthwatch, encourage people to share and comment on our content, and visit our websites.

18. We focus most on Facebook and, since April 2020, YouTube as these are the ones that help us engage most effectively with local people. YouTube integrates well into the new website and we use it to share vlogs and other video content.

19. Since the start of April 2020, more than 7,000 have reacted to, commented on, shared our content, viewed a video or clicked a link on our social media content – this is an increase of 288% on the same period last year.

Who we are engaging with on Facebook

20. In the September to August period, we had an average of 997 users on our Facebook page, and have grown the number of people following the page by 37%.
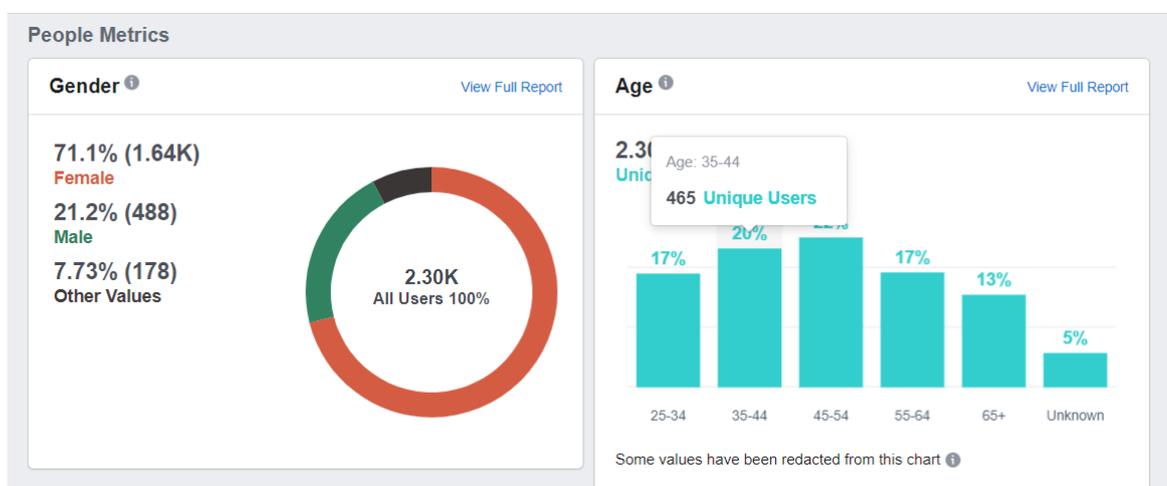
Web-conferencing

21. We supported the team to develop the use of both Zoom and Teams conferencing platforms using Teams for internal communication and Zoom for public meetings. Since April 2020, Healthwatch has held 16 public meetings online, including Healthwatch Board meetings and our AGM.

Digital - E-newsletters

22. We have continued to provide a monthly e-news to local stakeholders, segmented to each local Healthwatch area, with the focus on the information needs of patients and service users. Between September and August, readership has grown by 8% and is received by almost a thousand people.

23. We also produce a monthly team update for all staff and volunteers.

Earned media and advertising

24. Continued to build on positive relationships with traditional local media organisations (radio, newspapers and television), with more than 60 articles in the press in this period, although we do have gaps in consistent coverage in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. This is an area we will work to develop in the next 12 months.

25. We also work closely with stakeholders such as voluntary and community organisations, NHS, local authority, and community newsletters to promote Healthwatch services and engage people in our work. In this period, we had more than 80 articles in other stakeholders' publications.

26. We've undertaken limited advertising activities in this period, but will be increasing our Facebook advertising, implementing Google ad campaigns as well as looking for other appropriate opportunities to reach people who are offline.

Hardcopy materials

27. We continue to develop hardcopy engagement and promotional materials to support face to face engagement work, and other core Healthwatch activities. This has decreased since the start of the pandemic with the necessary constraints of Covid-safe ways of working. However, we are starting to develop this again, and as part of our Covid-19 survey we distributed more than 3,000 flyers to local people in receipt of food boxes.

28. We provide hardcopy versions of our reports to anyone on request and created a hardcopy version of the survey.

Accessible information

29. We endeavour to ensure that our information, events, and services are accessible to people with information access needs, or to those whose first language is not English.

30. In early 2020, we developed an information leaflet which was translated into 14 of our local community languages to support the work of the engagement team.

31. We produce easy read versions of our main reports, and in this period have produced an easy read version of our Annual Report, our Five-year strategy, and our End of Life care report.