

## **Dudley MBC**

### **Local HealthWatch Stakeholder Forum**

**Great Hall, Dudley College 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

#### **Governance and Accountability**

- Previous experiences in the setting up of the Local Involvement Network (LINK) were such that valuable time had been lost at the beginning of the process agreeing the appropriate Governance structures.
- Structures should be simple, clear and transparent.
- Robust terms of reference, including the processes for appointing members to the HealthWatch Board, would be required to ensure its effective performance

#### **Independence**

- Need to avoid potential conflict of interest given that HealthWatch is to be commissioned by the Local Authority with a remit to challenge its performance on health and social care services and also to challenge performance of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- The financial arrangement between the Local Authority and HealthWatch needed to be such that it did not impinge upon the new organisations independence or indeed limit its scope or extent of its enquiries.
- This must however be balanced to ensure that appropriate and proportionate financial checks and counterbalances were in place to safeguard expenditure of public monies.

#### **Membership and Representation**

- There needs to be clarity over the membership of HealthWatch and in the way members are elected/appointed to ensure fair representation.
- Members should be elected based on their experiences of both the subject area and representative of their local constituencies.
- Members of HealthWatch should have a greater profile so that it was easier for residents to find out who was representing them on the board.
- One model proposed was utilised a publicly elected process, similar to that used to appoint lay governors for NHS Trusts.
- HealthWatch should represent people from a broad range of communities based on and not limited to interest, geography, demography and abilities/disabilities.
- Membership shouldn't just be 'the same old suspects' and new participants should be welcomed and encouraged to participate.
- Given the varied definitions of 'communities' HealthWatch should be genuinely "accessible and visible to all" and not necessarily representative of all.
- It would be hard for HealthWatch to truly and accurately represent the views of all 306,000 residents within the Borough.
- HealthWatch should also represent the needs of carers as well as those they care for
- Volunteer Agreements should be developed to formalise the involvement of volunteers and to establish parameters to which both parties can and would work.

## Engagement

- HealthWatch board should be representative of the Dudley Borough but not dominated by professionals from the local authority or health service agencies.
- A Board with lay members or seats on the board for observers could add value and a healthy balance between would mean that all views were treated with respect.
- Councillors were critical to the success of both HealthWatch and the Health and Wellbeing Board but they will need support to appropriately understand the health and social care environment.
- Councillors sitting on HealthWatch and the Health and Wellbeing boards would strengthen their ability to represent the views and champion the interests of their constituents. But their own particular party views shouldn't unduly influence their decisions.
- Significant importance in the relationship between HealthWatch and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Suggested that safeguards should be developed that ensured that HealthWatch was able to influence and help shape the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Agendas shouldn't be driven or discussions dominated by more vocal service-user groups at the detriment of others. Avoid where possible self-elected members.
- HealthWatch should be an effective enabler and facilitator to ensure that the views from a range of people are heard fairly, equally and with respect. It must also ensure that representation was varied and that the same people didn't feature on all of the various groups
- HealthWatch should engage with individuals - not purely engagement through representative groups. This was best done by tapping into and working collaboratively with existing service users and networks. These could include patient panels and patient liaison groups and also utilising the expertise and powerful communication channels of community and disability groups.
- Primary role for HealthWatch should be mapping, harnessesing and co-ordinating existing activity rather than reinventing wheels. Thus reducing additional contributions from volunteers.
- HealthWatch should work closely with Dudley Council for Voluntary Services to embrace its existing knowledge, expertise and networks.
- HealthWatch needs to secure the views of people living in residential and nursing homes where appropriate and of service users accessing community based services.
- With an obvious preference for prevention rather than cure the relationship between HealthWatch and Public Health is critically important.
- HealthWatch should work with patient panels, attend commissioning groups and cluster board meetings and that more sessions like the one organised with clinical leads, with local people and officers from the local authority should be held
- There needed to be greater clarity on the long tem role of PALS and also the roles and responsibilities of the GP Consortium.
- The experience and expertise of PALS should harnesssed in some way but people were concerned about PALS acting as their advocates due to the perception that they were not totally independent.
- Question over why there was duplication within the PALS service having three Separate PALS
- Community Health Champions could be a good mechanism to communicate messages and receive feedback.

- Form the consultation / engagement process so far not enough service users, patients and carers have had the opportunity to contribute and that it is not for health and social care professionals to design Dudley's HealthWatch.

## **Performance, Outcomes and Results**

- Robust performance framework for HealthWatch with agreed and regularly monitored and published outcomes and targets would help to build confidence in the new organisation amongst users and representative groups and create a strong sense of transparency.
- Timely and responsive actions in dealing with complaints and issues would contribute to building the credibility of the new organisation. Important to be clear upfront about the outcomes HealthWatch could reasonably be expected to achieve, how and by when rather than create unrealistic expectations.
- HealthWatch needs to be honest and transparent about the boundaries of service user involvement – identifying what can they meaningfully influence, and what are the things that can't be debated – for example in the JSNA and the priorities arising from it.
- Quality Services should stay a priority particularly in light of cuts and efficiency savings.
- Important that HealthWatch avoided falling into 'committee mode' and that the key to its success would be in delivering meaningful engagement and change rather than just effective consultation
- There should be clear pathways for people once they are in the system

## **Skills and Competencies**

- HealthWatch should provide appropriate training to enable its staff / members to undertake the tasks expected of it.
- It should provide sufficient capacity to allow the necessary mentoring skills to develop better skilled volunteers.
- HealthWatch should also have both the skills and independence to deal effectively with professional and vexatious complainants
- Needs to develop a balance between identifying success and failure in that it can offer constructive criticism rather than purely identifying weakness or apportioning blame
- HealthWatch should ensure people understood the difference between user involvement forums and support groups and campaigning groups. All of which have different agendas.

## **Holding to Account**

- HealthWatch should be empowered to ensure professionals attend meetings and to answer questions
- HealthWatch needs to hold the various boards to account for delivery across the health and social care arenas.
- Were provider organisations going to be accountable to HealthWatch on top of other regulatory and inspection frameworks – concern that multiple accountability layers will be too onerous and impact upon from patient care.

## **Organisation and Scope**

- Organisation tasked with developing Dudley HealthWatch should have experience of establishing democratic processes and in developing a democratic organisation
- Core functions should be around listening, challenging and supporting.
- HealthWatch should have strong financial controls and be open and transparent in all it does.
- HealthWatch should adopt application type process for the appointment of the management committee / board of HealthWatch.
- The organisation selected to run Dudley's HealthWatch should have a clear understanding of local needs for health and social care and a strong understanding of both supply and demand
- HealthWatch should also look to empower local people and provide appropriate training and skills to enable volunteers to undertake specific tasks
- Keen to explore how HealthWatch support could support other local community organisations by sub contracting parts of HealthWatch work, for example its advocacy role.
- Dynamics at meetings should be balanced to ensure the views of individuals were listened to and that community representatives were not drowned out or intimidated in the presence of professionals, elected members or senior officers.
- A Keeness to ensure all aspects of health and social care were covered by HealthWatch and that it was not dominated by one particular strand.
- Regular reviews should be held to ensure that a broad and fair range of services were covered that were consistent with the priorities of and for local people.
- Greater clarity was needed on what would be expected to be a statutory requirement for HealthWatch as apposed to what would be nice to do
- HealthWatch needed to be linked in, and fully understood, the bigger picture such as the relationship between health and housing, unemployment and benefits changes
- Wellbeing should be addressed and the focus of HealthWatch not just limited to Health and Social Care.
- Keen to see the integration of social care complaints within HealthWatch.

## **Funding**

- The funding for HealthWatch should be appropriate to the need and demand placed upon it.
- Need to ensure that HealthWatch wasn't over reliant on volunteers and it needs have sufficient resources at it disposal to undertake the work expected of it.
- The funding model should not impinge upon the independence of HealthWatch mainly in respect of the impact on the potential need to be critical of Council provided services.
- Suitable safeguards should be in place to enable HealthWatch to raise concerns without risk to secure answers and positive outcomes.
- Could the Health and Well Being Board could commission HealthWatch instead of the Local Authority

## **Advocacy**

- Major role for HealthWatch should be around advocacy and to address the need for a higher profile around how to go about making complaints and accessing advocate support.
- HealthWatch should be clear on the limitations of its advocacy and sufficient resources should be invested to recruit and train independent advocates to build greater capacity.
- If and how are existing advocates going to be integrated into HealthWatch and would there would be a fee for its advocacy support.
- HealthWatch should consider offering a contract out to local community based groups for advocacy support in an attempt to build on local knowledge and expertise.

## Geographical Context

- Greater clarity was needed about HealthWatch over how it will deal with services that cross geographic boundaries for instance, how will HealthWatch be able to influence health and social care provision that Dudley residents might access in Sandwell, Birmingham or nationally.
- Would Dudley's HealthWatch would be part of a Black Country sub regional network.
- There was potential for joined up working with other HealthWatch organisations regionally and nationally to look at common areas of concern.

## Profile and Communications

- HealthWatch should have a clear and recognisable identity on a local sub-regional, regional and national platform equally HealthWatch should operate from visible and easily accessible premises.
- HealthWatch should publish an annual report and for this to be communicated widely and in a variety of appropriate formats.
- HealthWatch should strive to produce clear and understandable literature and messages to the public in an appropriate style for the intended audience.
- Jargon and acronyms should be avoided and should always be written using 'Plain English'.
- HealthWatch should communicate effectively its services, the support it will provide and those to which it will signpost to other support agencies.
- HealthWatch should also produce appropriate information relating to children's health related matters and used a variety of appropriate communication channels.
- HealthWatch promoted what is already available rather than duplicating services and it should look to using libraries for awareness raising and particularly in relation to signposting
- Should work with the local media to flag up positive news stories relating to health and social care and should aim to become a respected contact for the press to contact when things haven't gone so well.
- It should also look to use the media to publicise the purpose and services of HealthWatch.
- A Website for Dudley HealthWatch was important but only where it has a role, purpose and function and that it was kept up to date and contained useful and meaningful information.
- Social Media (facebook, twitter etc) should be used as alternative communication channels to reach wider audiences.
- The name HealthWatch is misleading as it doesn't truly represent the organisations responsibilities around social care. HealthWatch in Dudley should have its own local branding and a more fitting name
- Development of a communication plan was essential to ensure the right information was being communicated to the right audiences at the right times
- Important that regular messages are sent out about HealthWatch in the run up to its formation that details what HealthWatch will mean to people.