

WORKING PROTOCOL BETWEEN PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND HEALTHWATCH SOUTHEND**Background**

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 introduced 152 local Healthwatch, as new organisations to provide a voice for the views and concerns of the public about health and social care services. These local Healthwatch organisations will research areas of concern or gaps in service provision. Each local Healthwatch will feed the intelligence it gathers into its local Health and Wellbeing Board and Healthwatch England (part of the Care Quality Commission). Findings and reports will be shared with the commissioners and providers to whom the information is relevant, such as clinical commissioning groups and foundation trusts, and local Healthwatch organisations will strive to resolve issues locally in a constructive way through dialogue and strong working relationships. In some areas of the country, including Southend on Sea, local Healthwatch organisations have also been commissioned to provide health complaints advocacy and a public facing information and advice service. Healthwatch organisations replace the former Local Involvement Networks (LINKs).

In Southend-on-Sea, the People Scrutiny Committee ('the Scrutiny Committee') has been established. The Scrutiny Committee is a Committee of the Council and which acts as the Health Scrutiny Committee. This Committee fulfils the Council's responsibilities under 'The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013' to have a health scrutiny provision.

The role of the Scrutiny Committee is to hold NHS bodies to account for the quality of their services through powers to obtain information, ask questions in public and make recommendations for improvements that have to be considered. The Scrutiny Committee can refer matters via full Council to the Secretary of State. All commissioners and providers of publicly funded health and social care are covered as well as policies arising from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS).

This document sets out a Protocol for how Healthwatch Southend and the Scrutiny Committee will work together in relation to:-

- Exchange of information
- Referrals of issues to the People Scrutiny Committee
- Co-ordination of activities

Exchange of information

1. In order to provide opportunities for regular exchange of information between the two organisations, informal meetings will be held between the Scrutiny Committee Chairman and the Chairman of Healthwatch Southend. The main objectives of these meetings will be:-
 - a) to enable any issues arising to be discussed at an early stage (this will not prevent Healthwatch Southend from contacting the Council with urgent concerns, either by telephone or email).
 - b) to discuss opportunities for co-ordination of Healthwatch Southend and Scrutiny Committee activities in relation to particular issues.

2. The named contact point for health scrutiny at Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is:-
Fiona Abbott, Health Scrutiny Lead officer
Tel: 01702 215104
Email: fionaabbott@southend.gov.uk
3. The named contact point at Healthwatch Southend is:-
Jon Keay, Healthwatch Manager
Tel: 01702 220104
Email: JKeay@healthwatchsouthend.co.uk
Web: www.healthwatchsouthend.co.uk
4. At the beginning of each Municipal Year, Healthwatch Southend will be invited to appoint a representative to sit on the People Scrutiny Committee, as a non-voting member.

Referrals of issues to Scrutiny Committee

5. Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Health and Social Care Act 2012, Healthwatch Southend can refer a matter relating to health and social care services to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee of a local authority. At Southend, matters can be referred to the People Scrutiny Committee.
6. Referrals to the Scrutiny Committee should:
 - (a) Only come from the Healthwatch Southend Board.
 - (b) Be directed to the Health Scrutiny Lead officer.
 - (c) Be in writing but may be in electronic form.
 - (d) Raise matters of concern to Healthwatch Southend following unsuccessful attempts to achieve local resolution with the appropriate health and social care commissioners and providers.
 - (e) Raise matters which Healthwatch Southend wishes to raise as good practice.
7. The Scrutiny Committee must:
 - (a) acknowledge receipt of the referral within 20 working days; and
 - (b) keep the referrer informed of the Scrutiny Committee's actions in relation to the matter.
 - (c) take into account any relevant information provided by Healthwatch Southend.
 - (d) decide whether or not the referral is within its terms of reference and it can add value through scrutiny.
8. The Scrutiny Committee could decide that:
 - (a) it does wish to scrutinise the issue and does so at the meeting; or
 - (b) it does wish to scrutinise the issue, and adds it to the forward work programme and agrees a date for the scrutiny; or
 - (c) it does not wish to scrutinise the issue.

9. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee will provide a response to the Chairman of Healthwatch Southend regarding the Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the referral.

Co-ordination of activities

10. Healthwatch Southend is an independent organisation that will develop its own work programme. Similarly, the Scrutiny Committee is free to pursue the issues that Members consider to be of greatest concern. It is also acknowledged that there can be mutual benefit in co-ordination of activity between Healthwatch Southend and the Scrutiny Committee to achieve the best outcomes for health and social care service users.

Dated:.....July 2013

Councillor Alex Kaye
Chairman, People Scrutiny Committee

Janice Price
Chair
Southend Association of Voluntary Services