

# Working protocol

**PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND  
HEALTHWATCH SOUTHEND**

**JULY 2019**

Fiona Abbott: Designated Scrutiny Officer

# WORKING PROTOCOL BETWEEN THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND HEALTHWATCH SOUTHEND

## Background

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 introduced local Healthwatch for every area of the country. Each local Healthwatch is an organisation that is independent of the NHS and the local authority. Healthwatch Southend exists to give a voice to the people of Southend-on-Sea, both adults and children who:

- Need information about health or social care services
- Want to see services improve
- Need help to make a complaint or raise a concern about an NHS service or worker

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 health scrutiny provision.

Guidance to support local authorities and their partners to deliver effective health scrutiny was published in June 2014<sup>1</sup>. The "primary aim of health scrutiny is to act as a lever to improve the health of local people, ensuring their needs are considered as an integral part of the commissioning, delivery and development of health services".

The Scrutiny Committee has the power 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).

The Regulations set up formal relationships between local healthwatch and local health scrutiny, to ensure that the new system reflects the outcomes of involvement and engagement with patients and the public.

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 discussions will be held between the Health Scrutiny lead officer (and if necessary the Scrutiny Committee Chair) and the Healthwatch Senior Officer. The main objectives will be:-

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/324965/Local\\_authority\\_health\\_scrutiny.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/324965/Local_authority_health_scrutiny.pdf)

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- 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](mailto:fionaabbott@southend.gov.uk)*
3. The named contact point at Healthwatch Southend is:-
- Jean Broadbent*  
*Tel: 01702 416320*  
*Email: [jean.broadbent@family-action.org.uk](mailto:jean.broadbent@family-action.org.uk)*  
*Web: [www.healthwatchsouthend.co.uk](http://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 Senior Officer, or designated deputy;
  - (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;
  - (b) keep the referrer informed of the Scrutiny Committee's actions in relation to the matter referred;
  - (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

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- (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 Chair of the Scrutiny Committee will provide a response to the Healthwatch Senior Officer 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.

*Councillor Lesley Salter  
Chair  
People Scrutiny Committee*

*Freddie Dawkins  
Healthwatch Advisory Board  
Family Action*

Dated: July 2019

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