

Healthwatch Southend Strategic Direction

Background

Each top tier local authority is required under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to commission a local Healthwatch from a charity or social enterprise. Their function is to act as the independent voice of local residents who use, or may use, publically-funded health or social care services. Each local Healthwatch covers residents from birth to end of life services. We are not a single issue organisation.

Introduction

Key activities for a local Healthwatch include signposting residents to local services, capturing feedback about experience of local care to inform the commissioning and provision of health and care services, and holding key players to account. This latter role is through membership of the Health & Wellbeing Board and co-option to the People Scrutiny Committee, but also via a direct link to the Care Quality Commission.

Current priorities

Our last Annual Report included the following key areas of work:

- Looking at the impact of Covid-19
- Vulnerable people
- Improving how we reach local people
- Special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Working with partners
- Strengthening Healthwatch Southend

Feedback mechanisms

As an independent local and public service, we set our own strategic priorities to inform our engagement and feedback activities for the coming period. One way of capturing feedback is through our legal power to “Enter and View” premises, speaking to patients, service users, carers and staff. The other is through meeting local residents at community events, surveys or questionnaires, or focus groups.

Some of our engagement work can be informed by partners across Southend or the SE Essex Place – can we capture local people’s experience to feed in to a new service, for example. However, we are also anxious to offer the community the opportunity to contribute to our priority setting process.

Decision-making process

Because our scope is so wide, Healthwatch Southend uses some principles to prioritise its work

- Does the issue impact on a large number of people or have a very significant impact on a smaller number of people.
- Has the issue has been raised by a large number of people.
- Is there the potential for Healthwatch Southend to make a significant difference to the issue in question.
- Does the issue fit with Healthwatch Southend’s priorities or the priorities and timescales of other strategic local commissioners, providers and organisations.

- Has the issue been raised and evidenced by a representative organisation with specialist knowledge of concerns or views of local people, such as Healthwatch England or the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Does the issue highlight gaps, such as gaps in service delivery or where the voice of local people is not being considered.
- Does the issue affect people who find public services hard to access.
- Do we have sufficient resources and capacity.

Conclusion

Members of the Health & Wellbeing Board are invited to contribute suggestions for consideration by Healthwatch Southend.