



**Healthwatch England and the Local Government Association
'How we all work together'**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTHWATCH ENGLAND AND THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

Purpose

This document is not a legal document; it is intended to provide a common line of action and understanding between Healthwatch England and the Local Government Association (LGA), in relation to supporting both Local Healthwatch (LHW) organisations and Local Authorities (LAs) as commissioners of LHW.

It is designed to ensure that together Healthwatch England and the LGA make demonstrable differences to the consumers of health and social care.

Background

Healthwatch England was established in accordance with section 181 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 as a committee of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) with the purpose acting as an effective, independent consumer champion making demonstrable differences to consumers of health and social care.

The LGA is the national voice of local government, working with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

Through the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which amends the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, all LAs in England which provide Social Care services have been given the duty to establish an effective, efficient and representative Local Healthwatch from April 2013.

Local Healthwatch will have the following functions:

- Gathering views and understanding the experiences of patients and the public;
- Making people's views known;
- Promoting and supporting the involvement of people in the commissioning and provision of local care services and how they are scrutinized;
- Providing information and signposting about access to services and support for making informed choices;
- Recommending investigation or special review of services via Healthwatch England or directly to the CQC; and
- Making the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England and providing a steer to help it carry out its role as national champion.

Expectations

Both Healthwatch England and the LGA have roles to play in ensuring that LHW organisations are the best possible organisations they can be and have the support required to become the local consumer champion for health and social care.

In meeting the objectives of the Agreement the LGA will continue to reflect the insights and ambitions of their member councils as commissioners of LHW. Likewise, Healthwatch England will continue to act as a network lead for LHW organisations, with a duty to respond to and act on the needs and ambitions of its local network.

Both Healthwatch England and the LGA have an interest in the implementation of the national policy goals of:

- improving health and well-being;
- providing a strong consumer champion for health; and
- strengthening local engagement.

The two organisations have distinct but complementary roles that may cover common ground and address similar themes.

The role of the LGA will be to:

- support commissioners in their commissioning duties; and
- drive good practice and the continuous improvement of LHW.

The role of Healthwatch England will be to:

- support the development of the capacity of LHW to act as a consumer champion; and
- raise awareness and engagement with local people and communities.

As a virtue of this, there will be opportunities for collaboration, information sharing and joint working between the two organisations.

Key sources of development and support needs for LHW organisations

- Jointly identified needs for the continued development of effective LHW at national and local level;
- Jointly identified risks to the delivery of effective LHW at national and local level;
- Findings from the work of Healthwatch England as a national consumer champion, which may be of relevance to LAs; and
- Findings from the work of the LGA on sector lead improvement, which includes LHW.

Principles

The LGA and Healthwatch England will work together following the four principles set out below and all decisions about collaborative work between the LGA and Healthwatch England will be subject to these four principles.

Each party will respect each other's independent status and will cooperate when necessary or appropriate, and work together in undertaking their respective duties when this contributes most to improvements in health and social care services.

Both parties will be open and transparent in their decisions about when and where it is appropriate for them to work collaboratively.

Openness

When working independently, both organisations undertake to:

- Keep each other informed of upcoming events, briefings and products and to working to brand these jointly where possible;
- Seek advice and input as appropriate;
- Share intelligence and information about emerging issues from LHW, as well share as areas of good practice or concerns about LHW; and
- Develop and maintain a joint map of areas of concern and emerging best practice.

Collaboration

Both organisations undertake to:

- Work together to influence health and social care services and outcomes;
- Share examples of good practice when appropriate;
- Explore possible areas for partnership working; and
- Support Healthwatch providers and commissioners to develop new or neglected areas of work.

Co-operation

- The working relationship between the LGA and Healthwatch England will be characterised by regular contact and open exchange of information;
- Each organisation will share relevant respective proposed programmes of work at an early stage and will consult on how each could contribute to the other's programme;
- The LGA and Healthwatch England may by agreement collaborate on studies; and
- Where either organisation encounters significant concerns that fall within the remit of the other organisation, those concerns will be conveyed to the other organisation.

Communication

- Each organisation will involve the other in meetings, conferences and other public discussions relating to collaborative and other relevant work; and
- Where it is in the interests of both the LGA and Healthwatch England, there will be scope for issuing joint press releases or public statements.

Katherine Rake

Dr Katherine Rake

Chief Executive
Healthwatch England

15/4/13
Date

S. J. Burlington

Sally Burlington

Head of Programmes
Community Wellbeing, Children and Young People
Local Government Association

Date 16/4/13