



Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group

## Bristol Health & Wellbeing Board

### Update on HealthWatch Bristol

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#### 1. Purpose of the report

To provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on local HealthWatch Bristol and facilitate discussion on how the Board can support HealthWatch in patient and public involvement.

#### 2. Context

From 1 April 2013, each local authority area has its own local HealthWatch. HealthWatch replaces the Local Involvement Networks. HealthWatch England is the umbrella body that provides national guidance to local HealthWatches. Each local authority commissioned its own HealthWatch; in Bristol there was a competitive tendering process which resulted in the contract being awarded to The Care Forum, working in partnership with Bristol CAB, the Carers' Support Centre and SEAP.

HealthWatch is an independent consumer champion for health and social care services to ensure that the voices of those who use services reach decision makers. It has three key functions:

- Patient and public involvement
- Information and Signposting
- NHS Complaints Advocacy

Many local authorities chose to commission the NHS Complaints Advocacy outside of the HealthWatch contract; Bristol City Council chose to include it in the HealthWatch contract and included social care complaints procedure advocacy in addition.

HealthWatch is different to LINKs; this is not just a re-branding exercise. It is different because: HealthWatch has a statutory place on the Health and Wellbeing board; it is provided by rather than hosted by a corporate body; it is required to provide authoritative, evidence-based feedback to organisations responsible for commissioning or delivering local health and social care services and it has a recognised umbrella body.

### **The Care Forum's and partners' approach to HealthWatch**

Some local HealthWatches are setting up separate social enterprises to deliver the HealthWatch functions. The Care Forum's model was not to do this; as a corporate body already there is no need to spend time on the governance issues required to set up another organisation, rather we can get on with doing the work of HealthWatch right from the start.

Key tasks:

- Focusing patient and public involvement with on equalities issues
- Recruiting, training, inducting and supporting volunteers
- Ensuring staff and volunteers are “carer aware”
- Setting up an Advisory Group to lead and steer HealthWatch that includes volunteers
- Working in partnership with local voluntary and community sector organisations
- Building relationships with health and social care services and providers
- Developing the information and signposting service, based on The Care Forum's health, social care and wellbeing information service, Well Aware
- Working in partnership with SEAP, provider of NHS Complaints Advocacy and other advocacy providers
- Developing Young HealthWatch
- Developing research and evaluation function to ensure volunteers have credible evidenced information available to them

### **3. Key Risks and Opportunities**

HealthWatch provides a significant opportunity to engage service users in the design of health and social care services. Done well, HealthWatch can ensure a meaningful dialogue between commissioners and the public about what good services could and should look like.

The information and signposting service presents a key opportunity to direct people to services in the community rather than to primary and secondary care services. Well Aware contains thousands of records of local services, regularly updated, and functions both to help people access support in the community after they have used health and social care services and to work preventatively to keep people independent for as long as possible.

High quality advocacy services will identify issues and trends in health and social care services that can be brought to the Health and Wellbeing Board and/or other appropriate strategic groups.

The Care Forum is providing local HealthWatch in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and Somerset so there are opportunities to look at some of the health and social care issues across the area.

Risks include everything to do with patient and public involvement being passed over to HealthWatch rather than seeing HealthWatch as part of all the patient and public involvement work that is going in the city. HealthWatch could become tokenistic if volunteers are not supported enough to engage meaningfully.

#### **4. Conclusions**

For more information:

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#### **5. Recommendations**

- To note the content of the report.
- To support HealthWatch's engagement with the board and its work.

#### **6. Appendices**

None.