



## **Healthwatch North Tyneside policies and procedures**

### **Decision making – themes and issues**

**January 2024**

#### **Introduction**

Healthwatch North Tyneside is required to be transparent in our decision making. As an evidenced based organisation that champions the voice of users of health and social care services, we have adopted the following approach to prioritising themes and issues.

#### **Section 1 – Healthwatch Core Activities**

##### **The information we use for making decisions**

We seek to gather information from a wide variety of sources to ensure that our decisions are based on sound evidence. Our engagement with people and service users across North Tyneside is the bedrock of this evidence and our primary source. In addition, we gather information from local service providers and commissioners, voluntary sector organisations, our team of staff, volunteers and board members and national and local reports/data sets.

#### **2. Annual identification of Key Issues to focus on**

Each year the Healthwatch North Tyneside Board will agree the key thematic issues our work plan will focus on during the period. These will be published on our website, in our annual report and shared with our key stakeholders.

When identifying which thematic areas to focus on, the board will consider:

1. Feedback and issues raised by the public through our engagement and general activities – including our annual survey
2. Feedback and issues raised through our online feedback centre
3. Information from volunteers
4. Information gathered from local voluntary sector organisations
5. Information gathered from relevant national reports and media
6. Information gathered from health and social care providers and commissioners.
7. Information gathered by board members in the course of their work

The Director is responsible for involving the staff team, volunteers and board in understanding and interpreting the information gathered and to prioritise the future thematic activities. Section 5 below sets out what must be considered before an activity is agreed.

These priorities will become the core work for Healthwatch North Tyneside during the agreed period. If other issues or opportunities occur during the period, the Director and the Board should discuss the impact on the agreed priority issues.

### **3. Emerging or urgent issues**

In addition to the annual key issues process above, the Board, Director and the staff team will monitor trends in the information gathered throughout the year to identify any emerging issues. Feedback and trends will be discussed at staff team meetings and volunteer meetings where possible. External views should also be taken into account. The Director will be responsible for raising any emerging issues with the Board at the earliest opportunity so the Board can consider if they should be prioritised and, if so, whether that will impact upon existing agreed priorities.

### **4. Considerations when prioritising and agreeing activities**

The Director and the Board must consider the following issues when deciding what actions should be taken:

- How well does the issue link to our strategic plan?
- Will the activity have an impact and demonstrate Healthwatch North Tyneside adding value?
- Is there a need for an additional public voice on the issue?
- Is the issue already being addressed by another body or by other activity?
- Consider whether an issue:
  - impacts on a large number of people in North Tyneside
  - has a significant impact on a small number of people
  - particularly affects those who may be generally less heard
- Does Healthwatch North Tyneside have the capacity needed to deliver this activity? If not should it supplant another prioritised issue?
- Does Healthwatch North Tyneside have the expertise and resources needed to deliver this activity?
- Is there an opportunity for income generation?
- Is there an opportunity to collaborate with other Healthwatch organisations on this issue?
- Is there an opportunity to collaborate with other organisations on this issue?

The Director will normally prepare a brief paper for the Board outlining the above considerations and the options available.

## **5. Decision making**

The Board will review the information provided by the Director and agree actions and next steps. Discussions will be recorded in the minutes. Where a decision is taken by correspondence rather than during a meeting, the Board will be updated at the next meeting and the decision recorded in the minutes.

The Board may decide to:

- a) Take no action
- b) Monitor the issue for further discussion in the future
- c) Take action – including a brief outline of the type of actions to be taken, timescales and the resource required to deliver it.

The Board will agree whether a Board Member will support the issue or take a lead in overseeing activities.

Stakeholders will be notified of the Board's decision where appropriate. Our board meeting minutes are published on our website and are made available to the public.

## **6. Reviewing Healthwatch North Tyneside decisions**

A member of the public or an external organisation can ask us to reconsider a decision. The request must be submitted in writing to the Director explaining why the decision should be reviewed and should provide any additional supporting evidence. The Director will discuss with the team and the Chair, and provide a written response thereafter. If this process does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, then the Chair will discuss the issue at the next Board meeting.

## **7. Breaches in approach**

We are required to set out the approach we will follow if we should breach our policy. The following will apply if we discover we have inadvertently breached our agreed approach.

The Director will review whether or not a breach has occurred and produce a report to the Board explaining:

- What the breach was and what decisions were affected
- Any necessary steps to resolve an issue

- What steps will be taken to prevent recurrence
- Who and how to communicate the breach with.

## **Section 2 – Opportunities for additional funded activities**

The Director is responsible for identifying opportunities where Healthwatch North Tyneside could be commissioned to deliver projects or activities for additional separate funding.

Consideration should be given to:

- How well the opportunity fits with our aims and values – Particularly, will our independence and integrity be valued
- How well the opportunity fits with our strategic plan
- Whether the impact of this activity will be clear
- The value of the funding and the organisation's capacity to deliver this work and other practical considerations
- The ability to generate surplus from this work to support the development of the charity.

Decisions shall be taken in line with the thresholds set out in our financial controls policy with the Board being provided with a summary of the opportunity, and any decisions made.

## **Reviewing this policy**

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if the board deems necessary. This policy will be available to the public.

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