

## Governance Structure and Terms of Reference

### 1. Background

Healthwatch is part of the government's health and social care reforms introduced under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. A principle of the reforms is that patients and the public must be at the heart of everything our health and social care services do.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is the independent consumer and public champion for health and social care services in Wokingham Borough. Its aims are to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Healthwatch Wokingham Borough identifies the local trends and areas of concern about health and social care issues, informs people about the services available to them, supports them in making complaints about NHS services, and ensures that their views are integral to local commissioning processes and are raised at national level via Healthwatch England.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough has been hosted by The Advocacy People since April 2022. The Advocacy People have a successful track record of over 20 years providing a wide range of statutory and non-statutory advocacy services such as Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy, Community Mental Health Advocacy, Independent Mental Health Advocacy and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy.

Delivering health complaints advocacy puts The Advocacy People in a unique position having substantial experience of: supporting people through the NHS Complaints Procedure; working alongside local health services to resolve individual NHS complaints; achieving successful outcomes from NHS complaints for patients and their families.

The Advocacy People also host Healthwatch in other areas. For an up-to-date list of services, [click here](#).

## 2. Vision, Mission, and Values Vision

Championing the views of local people to achieve excellent health and social care services in Wokingham Borough

### Mission

- Listening to peoples' views, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their needs, and promoting the involvement of local people in health and social care decision making
- Working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, seeking a stronger voice together
- Using our statutory powers to hold to account commissioners and providers to improve services
- Empowering and informing people to get the most from their health and social care services

### Values

The following characteristics define how the staff and volunteers of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough should behave towards each other, partners and stakeholders, and people in Wokingham Borough. They are:

- Inclusive
- Transparent
- Accessible
- Accountable
- Independent
- Collaborative
- Proactive

### **3. Governance Structure**

#### **3.1 Healthwatch Wokingham Borough Advisory Group – responsibilities**

The Healthwatch Wokingham Borough Advisory Group oversees the strategic direction and operational activities of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough, including the delivery of the statutory Healthwatch functions and requirements in the service specification.

The overall responsibilities of the Healthwatch Advisory Group are to:

- Establish and safeguard vision, mission and values
- Set policy, strategy and structure
- Agree the annual work plan
- Identify areas that require further research and/or information and to set up task/finish groups to undertake the work
- Ensure accountability and compliance by
  - monitoring progress towards achieving objectives
  - seeking assurance that systems in place are robust and reliable
- Sign off the annual report to Healthwatch England

#### **3.2 Advisory Group members**

The group will be made up of a Chair, the Healthwatch Wokingham Borough Lead Officer, and at least two lay volunteers with appropriate knowledge and experience. Membership of the Healthwatch Advisory Group will initially be for a term of three years and will be ratified at the Healthwatch Wokingham Borough Group meeting. However, the members of the Group can serve for more than one term either as a mentor to a new member, or in the same role, if there are no other applicants and they retain the support of a majority of Advisory Group members. The size of the group can be varied with the agreement of the Advisory Group and The Advocacy People Management Team.

### **3.3 Chairperson**

The Chair's primary role is to ensure that Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is effective in its tasks of setting and implementing the direction and strategy. The key responsibilities are to:

- Lead the Advisory Group in ensuring that it fulfils its responsibilities for governance, by ensuring that Healthwatch acts in accordance with its terms of reference and by managing its activities.
- Optimise the relationship between the Healthwatch Advisory Group, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.
- Promote and represent Healthwatch Wokingham Borough effectively to external stakeholders.

The Chair will be elected by the Advisory Group members each year at the relevant Group meeting closest to the anniversary of becoming Chair. The Advisory Group may wish to appoint a Vice Chair to act as a substitute for the Chair and to chair meetings that the Chair is unable to attend.

### **3.4 Advisory Group Meetings**

The Healthwatch Advisory Group meetings will be quorate with 50% of the members attending, which must include at least two lay volunteers. The group will agree by a majority consensus where possible, if this is not possible agreement will be made by a voting ballot. If after consensus and voting, a decision cannot be reached, a committee of 3 will be established, comprising two members of the Advisory Group and the Chair of a Healthwatch Advisory Group from outside of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough. The two representatives drawn from the Wokingham Advisory Group will normally comprise the Chair and the Lead Officer, except in circumstances where both represent the same side of the argument. If this is the case, the Chair will step aside and be replaced by another member elected by the Advisory Group, representing the opposite view to that held by the Lead Officer. The committee of 3 will have the right to make the final decision with the casting vote given to the external Chair.

Meetings will be called and organised by the Chair of the Healthwatch Advisory Group and Healthwatch Wokingham Borough staff.

Topics for the meetings other than those agreed in the work plan will be generated by issues arising from the voices of people in Wokingham Borough, local meetings/groups, Healthwatch volunteers or any important local health/social care issue that may have arisen.

Members of the Healthwatch Advisory Group will decide on the frequency of meetings, and how many are to be meetings in public. However, there will be at least four meetings annually, plus 2-3 informal meetings.

The Public may submit questions to the Advisory Group meeting 14 days in advance for non-agenda items and two working days for an item on the agenda. The person asking the question may do so in person, or if not present will receive a written response which will be emailed and subsequently minuted. If the question requires a more detailed response, a written response will be emailed after the meeting hopefully within 14 days following the meeting and added to the minutes.

#### **4. Task/Finish Groups**

The Healthwatch Advisory Group will set up task/finish groups to undertake specific projects and tasks in the agreed annual work plan.

Members of the task/finish groups will be the Healthwatch Wokingham Borough staff and self-selected Advisory Group members/volunteers. The group will report back regularly to the Healthwatch Lead Officer and the Advisory Group and will contribute to the Healthwatch Annual Report.

#### **5. Code of Conduct**

All those who attend Healthwatch Advisory Group meetings will be bound by The Advocacy People's code of conduct and its policies on health and safety, equalities, safeguarding and confidentiality.