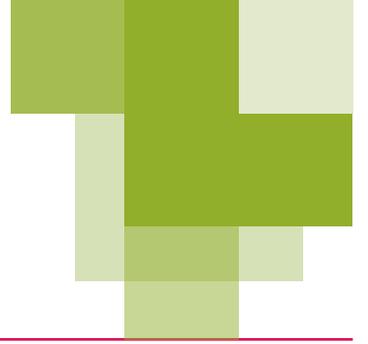


10 questions to ask if you're scrutinising...

...arrangements for effective local Healthwatch





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Introduction

This guide is one of a series designed to help Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) carry out their scrutiny work around various healthcare, social care and health improvement topics.

This guide is designed to help OSCs develop a range of high-level questions around arrangements for local Healthwatch. The aim of the guide is to help OSCs learn from the experiences of others and to assist them to scope scrutiny reviews, based on some key questions. It aims to cover all the relevant issues, but please adapt it to suit local circumstances. For example, it may not be relevant to ask all the questions listed here or to follow the sections sequentially



Why should Overview and Scrutiny Committees review arrangements for effective local Healthwatch?

Greater involvement of local people is at the heart of the Government's agenda to modernise health and social care. The White Paper 'Equity and Excellence' (Department of Health, 2010) made a commitment to put local clinicians and communities at the heart of the planning and delivery of healthcare, social care and health improvement. This approach aims to strengthen the development of services by empowering people who use services and the public to influence the services they receive and to shape the future pattern of health and social care in their areas.

Local Healthwatch will have a key role in strengthening the voices of people who use services and communities, building on the experience of Local Involvement Networks.

Local Healthwatch will have a stake in Health and Wellbeing Boards and will also be a component of the local 'web of accountability'. Overview and scrutiny committees (OSCs) have an interest in ensuring that the arrangements for local Healthwatch are effective in their areas.

Legal framework for local Healthwatch

Under the Health and Social Care Bill¹, local Healthwatch will be established through a duty placed on local authorities with social care responsibilities to secure that a local Healthwatch organisation carries out activities in their areas and that the arrangements operate effectively and represent value for money. The Secretary of State for Health has provided funding through the Area Based Grant to support the development of local Healthwatch.

Useful Information

Healthwatch Transition Plan

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_126325.pdf

Guidance

<http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/guidance-on-developing-local-healthwatch-groups/>

Smoothing the way – Developing local Healthcare through lessons from local involvement networks

<http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications?item=6999&offset=125>

¹ As at November 2011 the Health and Social Care Bill was subject to Parliamentary Approval



Councils and local Healthwatch

Subject to Parliamentary approval, relationships between local Healthwatch and councils are likely to operate at a number of levels:

1. Local Healthwatch organisations commissioned by councils that will judge whether local Healthwatch operates effectively and provides value for money.
 2. Local Healthwatch referring issues about health and social care services to appropriate OSCs of councils.
 3. Councils as commissioners of adult social care responding to local Healthwatch requests for information, reports and recommendations.
 4. Councils as providers of adult social care services allowing local Healthwatch to 'enter and view' premises in certain circumstances and responding to reports and recommendations.
 5. Local Healthwatch part of Health and Wellbeing Boards, with collective responsibility for producing joint strategic needs assessments (JSNAs) and joint health and wellbeing strategies (JHWSs) that will guide council social care commissioning plans.
 6. Council officers and councillors participating in local Healthwatch activities and clarity about potential conflicts of interest.
 7. Councils engaging and involving people who use services and communities. Local Healthwatch deciding how their activities relate to existing structures and methods.
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Ten questions to ask

The following 10 questions aim to help OSCs focus on the key areas to scrutinise in relation to the responsibilities of councils to commission local Healthwatch organisations that are effective and provide good value for money. Although these are questions for Executive Councillors and senior officers, OSCs may wish to seek views from LINK participants and host organisations so that they can use the lessons from LINKs to inform the development of local Healthwatch.

1. Establishing and sustaining local Healthwatch

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish how councils are planning for effective local Healthwatch and how they plan to sustain effective arrangements that represent good value.

- How do you know what a successful local Healthwatch organisation will look like?
- Which organisational model do you think is appropriate for local Healthwatch?
- Are you letting local people and groups influence the development of the arrangements for local Healthwatch?
- Have you reduced funding for existing LINK activities and how much are you allocating to develop local Healthwatch?
- Is there an indicative timeline for commissioning local Healthwatch and a shared commitment to overcome conflict?

2. Judging effectiveness and value of local Healthwatch

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish how councils plan to judge the effectiveness and value of local Healthwatch.

- How will you know whether local Healthwatch arrangements are effective and providing value for money?
- What information will you use to make these judgements about local Healthwatch?
- What will happen if local Healthwatch is not judged to be effective or providing value?



3. Supporting local Healthwatch

The question below aims to help OSCs establish council's understanding about the support needs of local Healthwatch.

- How confident are you that local Healthwatch will have the capacity and support to take part in Health and Wellbeing Boards, consider health and social care issues and take on additional functions?

4. Managing local Healthwatch arrangements

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish how much of the allocation for local Healthwatch is being retained by councils.

- How have you historically allocated the funding provided by the Department of Health through Area Based Grant for LINK activity?
- If you held back any funding, how did you assess that this was a reasonable amount?
- Are you planning to allocate all the funding from DH through Area Based Grant to local Healthwatch?

5. Conflicts of interest

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish where the responsibility for commissioning and managing local Healthwatch arrangements sit within the council and how potential conflicts of interest are anticipated and managed.

- Which department has responsibility to commission and manage local Healthwatch arrangements?
 - How will you ensure there is no 'conflict' between managing local Healthwatch arrangements and the activities of local Healthwatch in relation to adult social care and the contribution of local Healthwatch to Health and Wellbeing Boards?
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6. Funding local Healthwatch

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish the levels of funding that are available to local Healthwatch.

- How are you ensuring that local Healthwatch allocates budgets to cover health and social care issues and additional functions?
- What percentage of the allocation for local Healthwatch is actually available for local Healthwatch activities?

7. Outcomes from local Healthwatch

The question below aims to help OSCs establish to what extent funding for local Healthwatch is helping to meet the objectives for local Healthwatch to be inclusive and diverse.

- How do you evaluate how effectively local Healthwatch understands and is meeting the needs of local people and groups?

8. Awareness of local Healthwatch

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish how councils are ensuring that providers of adult social care are aware of local Healthwatch.

- How are you managing changes to provider contracts to ensure they respond to local Healthwatch and allow them to 'enter and view' adult social care premises?
- How have you ensured that providers are developing relationships with local Healthwatch?



9. Building on other community activity

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish the arrangements that councils have to build local Healthwatch in to existing community engagement activity.

- How are you ensuring local Healthwatch builds on existing relationships and resources and does not duplicate activity?
- How will local Healthwatch gather and present a wide range of views rather than relying on a few individuals to represent views?

10. Comparing approaches

The questions below aim to help OSCs establish whether the approach to local Healthwatch is reasonable in the context of approaches taken elsewhere.

- Are you sharing and learning from good practice examples with neighbours, comparable authorities or local Healthwatch Pathfinders?
 - How will local Healthwatch develop relationships with neighbouring LHWs and others with common areas of interest in order to share and learn from good practice?
 - If comparisons have been made with practice elsewhere, what lessons were learnt for the future?
 - What might you do differently in your approach to local Healthwatch from the approach to LINKs?
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