

Preparing for HealthWatch

CQC's plan to set up HealthWatch England





Purpose

This document outlines the work being undertaken to create HealthWatch England, in readiness for the launch of HealthWatch in October 2012.

*Note: All of the planning is based on an assumption that the sections of the Health and Social Care Bill 2011 relating to HealthWatch pass into law without significant amendment. This will not be confirmed until Royal Assent. For a full text of the Bill, and information on its progress in Parliament, please see:
<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/healthandsocialcare.html>*

Foreword



HealthWatch will be the new consumer champion for health and adult social care in England. For the first time this will clearly provide a platform for making the NHS and local government accountable to their local communities, people using care and carers to have their voices heard at a local and national level.

So far, we have had a diverse range of representatives from local involvement networks (LINks), local government, the third sector, equality groups, the Care Quality Commission and Department of Health as members of our advisory group. This has helped to shape how people using care and local communities will have a leadership and scrutiny structure working with clinicians, commissioners and providers. We have developed strong ideas on what HealthWatch should look and feel like as a critical friend – inclusive and open to all, irrespective of your economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, faith, and health condition.

We all recognise that for HealthWatch to be effective it will also need to contribute to improving health outcomes and community wellbeing, as well as being a driver in better service delivery, user accountability and satisfaction.

Our healthcare system is one of the best in the world and we want HealthWatch, as a consumer champion, also to have the same status, impact and respect.

Patrick Vernon

Chair of HealthWatch Advisory Group

Introduction

- HealthWatch will be the new consumer champion for health and social care in England. It will exist in two distinct forms – local HealthWatch organisations at local level, funded by and accountable to the public via local authorities, and HealthWatch England at national level.
- HealthWatch England will be a national organisation that enables the collective views of the people who use NHS and social care services to influence national policy.
- It will be a statutory committee of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with a Chair who will be a non-executive director of CQC. HealthWatch England will have its own identity within CQC, but it will be supported by CQC's infrastructure and it will have access to CQC's expertise.





HealthWatch England will have three main functions:

1. It will provide leadership, guidance and support to local HealthWatch organisations.
2. It will be able to escalate concerns about health and social care services raised by local HealthWatch to CQC. CQC will be required to respond to advice from its HealthWatch England subcommittee.
3. It will provide advice to the Secretary of State, NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor and the English local authorities, and they are required to respond to that advice. The Secretary of State for Health will be required to consult HealthWatch England on the mandate for the NHS Commissioning Board.

HealthWatch England will be required to make an annual report and lay a copy before Parliament.

CQC is leading the work to set up HealthWatch England. CQC's Board has approved principles for the establishment of Healthwatch England and an outline operating model.

Getting the structures in place

A number of essential activities must take place over the next 12 months to make sure we have a fully-functioning HealthWatch England in October 2012 (see below).

October 2011	Location agreed
November 2011	Recruitment for Chair designate begins*
December 2011	Outline business case
January 2012	Discussions on composition of committee begin; regulations drafted*
February 2012	Staffing structure recommendations Planning for information for local HealthWatch begins
March 2012	Discussions on formal relationship between CQC and HealthWatch England begin
April 2012	Chair designate in post* Chair signs off staffing structure and communication strategy. Recruitment of senior staff
May 2012	Regulations laid in Parliament, subject to Royal Assent (when Bill becomes an Act)*
June 2012	HealthWatch communication 'toolkit' ready Senior staff in post Business plan agreed Committee recruitment begins
July 2012	Essential governance documents signed off by Chair First-phase HealthWatch England website launches Engagement events regionally
August 2012	
September 2012	Formal agreement between CQC and HealthWatch England signed off Office equipped. Most staff in post. Committee members identified* .
October 2012	HealthWatch England launches Website launches Committee in post*

* items are subject to Parliamentary or Secretary of State decisions and timings may change

Appointment of Chair

The appointment of the Chair of HealthWatch England will be a public appointment because the Chair will also be a member of CQC's board. The process will be handled by the Department of Health with support from the Appointments Commission and the appointment will be made by the Secretary of State. The post will be advertised in the autumn of 2011, and the Chair designate is expected to take up post in April 2012.

Finance

The budget for HealthWatch England will be part of CQC's grant in aid from the Department of Health. CQC will submit a draft budget to the Department in early 2012 and agree a final budget in the summer of 2012.

CQC's agreement with HealthWatch England will set out the arrangements for managing the budget within our overall spending.





Role and composition of committee

The government will consider regulations for membership of the HealthWatch England committee early in 2012. These regulations will be laid in Parliament soon after the Bill becomes an Act (Royal Assent). The committee will be appointed by CQC. The committee appointment process will start in summer 2012, and the committee will take up its role in October 2012. (These arrangements are subject to Parliamentary approval).

Staffing and location

The staffing structure for HealthWatch England will be designed by March 2012 and agreed by the Chair designate in April 2012. Staffing will include a core team to support the Chair and committee, and teams providing support for local HealthWatch, information, analysis and communications. It will not be a large organisation. Support services such as finance, human resources and building management will be provided by CQC.

A small interim team will be recruited by the end of March 2012, to support the Chair designate. Senior staff will be in post by June. The remaining staff will take up post in September or October.

We are undertaking further work to identify the best place for HealthWatch England's headquarters.

Local HealthWatch

HealthWatch England's relationship with local HealthWatch

A core element of HealthWatch England's work is its relationship with local HealthWatch organisations. This includes two-way communications. CQC will develop web-based tools to enable HealthWatch England to gather and analyse information from local HealthWatch.

Some of CQC's existing relationships with local involvement networks (LINKs) will be mirrored in our relationships with local HealthWatch. CQC's local staff will keep in touch with local HealthWatch and will gather information on the quality of local services directly from them. Local HealthWatch will be able to raise concerns about the quality of services with local CQC staff. HealthWatch England will be able to monitor the concerns raised and to escalate these within CQC if necessary. During 2012, CQC staff will be briefed about the development of HealthWatch, so that they know how the system is evolving.



Using information from local HealthWatch and from elsewhere, HealthWatch England will provide advice to other bodies (specified in the Bill) and to the Secretary of State about the provision of care services. It will have a specific remit to comment on how health and social care services are involving people and promoting choice for people. To do this effectively it will need to use CQC's expertise in quality analysis and its understanding of the issues affecting health and social care. We anticipate that once senior staff are appointed (summer 2012) they will start to build relationships with the emerging new local bodies in the structure. These relationships will be developed during 2012, ready to support full implementation of the changes in the NHS during 2013 and 2014.

The Chair of the HealthWatch England committee will play a key role in providing leadership at national level. A programme of meetings and visits from May to September will enable the Chair designate to meet LINKs members and other local groups, and to start to promote the vision and set out the strategy for HealthWatch England.

Supporting local HealthWatch

A crucial function for HealthWatch England is providing leadership and support for local HealthWatch. As part of developing Healthwatch overall, CQC will work with the Department of Health, and with stakeholders and advisers, to draft the essential information that local HealthWatch organisations will need as they get going. This work will draw on lessons from the Pathfinder areas for local HealthWatch. The Department of Health will continue to support LINKs as they move towards local HealthWatch.

HealthWatch England will also provide local support and training to help local HealthWatch to develop. In particular, this will help them take up new roles around providing information, being part of Health and Wellbeing Boards and (in some cases) providing advocacy for NHS complaints. Between November 2011 and February 2012 CQC will continue to explore with LINKs and with other stakeholders the nature of the support required, so that we can provide it in the most effective way.



Communicating HealthWatch

The communication plan for HealthWatch England is closely linked to the overall plan for HealthWatch, and we are working, as far as is practicable, to have a single approach to communication – both nationally and locally. Our aim is to have a shared identity for all HealthWatch bodies, so they are easily identifiable for the public. This will be supported by a programme of communication using local and national media, including voluntary sector and trade press but also making use of web-based communication. We plan to publish a ‘toolkit’ of templates and briefings for use by local HealthWatch in June 2012.

CQC and the Department of Health are committed to working in partnership with the broadest possible range of people as we set up HealthWatch. An online community is open to anyone who wants to take a role in shaping the work, from which a monthly bulletin is published.

Email **healthwatch@nunwood.com** to sign up to the online community. Information is also posted on the LINks website, LX, and updates are on the Department of Health modernisation site. Inside CQC, staff get regular updates via the intranet and the staff bulletin, Cue.

HealthWatch England will have its own website, distinct from CQC, which will be launched in October 2012. We will explore different options for relating the HealthWatch England website to local HealthWatch websites during autumn 2011.

How to contact us

Phone: 03000 616161

Email: enquiries@qc.org.uk

Write to us at:

Care Quality Commission

Gallowgate

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 4PA

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