

Good Engagement Charter:

Supporting the involvement of patients, public and carers in health and social care in Warwickshire: A call to action

Introduction

Why we believe in this Charter

Healthwatch believes that everyone should have the chance to take part in shaping health and social care services in a way that suits them.

People are often asked to 'have their say' about health and social care but how do they know their voices are being heard?

We believe that all voices are of equal worth, and that everyone has a right to be heard.

Healthwatch will use this Charter to encourage organisations to adopt best practice and ensure that everyone, including those who are seldom heard, is given the opportunity to make a difference.

What is engagement?

'Engagement' is a term that is used to describe all forms of activity which involve gathering feedback, opinions and views from people who use services, carers and members of the public.

Formal consultation is often considered to be a type of 'engagement', but not the only kind. It also includes:

- Talking with service users about their experiences of using services
- Carrying out surveys
- Setting up a patient/service user/carers group
- Working to involve people in service redesign
- Other relevant activities.

The Charter

Healthwatch proposes a Charter of nine principles for organisations that carry out patient and public engagement:

1. We will be clear about why we are engaging with our communities

The reasons for involving people will be clear from the start.

2. We will make sure that we are working with partners when engaging with our communities

We know that people do not like being asked about the same thing repeatedly. We believe that a joined-up approach is more efficient and is better for people taking part.

3. We will make sure there is plenty of time for engagement

We will give people plenty of time to give their opinions and will arrange events at different times so that more people can take part.

4. We will use a range of different ways for people to have their say

We know that some people like to talk in groups; some prefer to complete an online survey, others prefer to talk to one person about their ideas. We will strive to be inclusive and will tailor our approach to meet the needs of the people we are hoping will take part.

5. We will be open, honest and transparent when engaging with our communities

When we engage with local people, we will be open and honest about what can and cannot be influenced – including any constraints and boundaries – and we will give clear reasons for this.

6. We will make sure that information is accessible by all

We believe that information needs to be accessible, clear, understandable, and relevant. It also needs to be presented in the correct format for the audience.

7. We will provide people with regular and timely feedback when engaging with them

The results of engagement will be easily accessible to anyone people who wishes to view it – especially those people affected by the results of the consultation. Results and feedback will be provided within an appropriate timescale.

8. We will learn from best practice and use it to inform future engagement with our communities

We believe that engagement that has worked well should be celebrated, shared between partners, and used to inform the planning of future engagement.

9. We will evaluate all engagement, and make sure that any lessons learned are used to make our engagement better in the future

We are committed to ensuring that the outcomes of engagement will be reviewed to see how well it worked, and if it has achieved what it set out to do. The engagement process will also be assessed using the standards set out in this charter

A call to action

Healthwatch is asking organisations to **Adopt the Charter**.

We believe that adopting the principles in the Charter will be an effective way of gathering the views of local communities, and gaining the support and commitment of local people

Healthwatch suggests the following steps be taken when adopting the charter:

- 1. Discuss the Charter within your organisation**
- 2. Indicate to your local Healthwatch that you wish to adopt it**
- 3. Produce a short, published, pledge document setting out the actions your organisation will undertake to develop your 'engagement ' practice in line with the Charter**
- 4. Identify someone at board level (Exec or non- Exec) to Champion Good Engagement.**
- 5. Report regularly on progress against your pledge**

This approach fits very well with the recommendations from the Francis and Keogh reports about organisations ensuring that they are open, transparent and listening organisations.

For commissioners and other bodies involved in the scrutiny of services we ask you to **Adopt the Charter** and to consider how to use it as a lens through which to check on the engagement activities of organisations that you commission.