

HealthWatch Advisory Group bulletin

Issue four

November 2011

Introduction

This is the regular bulletin from the HealthWatch advisory group. It contains up to date, authoritative information on HealthWatch developments.

Feel free to use the content in your publications to keep your stakeholders and members informed about HealthWatch.

Newsflash

The Health and Social Care Bill 2010 – 2011, that will set up HealthWatch is currently going through the House of Lords. Progress on the Bill can be monitored on the [parliament website](#).

Background to HealthWatch

To strengthen the collective voice of patients and carers in the system at both a local and national level Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) will evolve to become Local HealthWatch and HealthWatch England will be set up as the independent patient champion with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

HealthWatch England key issues

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published a plan providing details of how it is preparing for the launch of HealthWatch England on 1 October 2012. It provides details about the proposed timeline and lays out more details about the specific plans for setting up HealthWatch England.

The document is available on [CQC's website](#).

Local HealthWatch key issues

HealthWatch pathfinders were launched in August and are underway in planning and testing out different aspects of the proposed Local HealthWatch. The Department of Health (DH) has published a document that sets out further information about the 75 HealthWatch pathfinders and their areas of specific focus, including contact details and regional location within England.

The document is available on [DH's website](#).

Summary of discussions from HealthWatch advisory group sub groups

The HealthWatch advisory group has set up a number of task and finish groups to focus on specific areas of the work programme. They are listed

below, with a summary of what they have been working on. When these finish their work, others will be set up. These views, and others, as they emerge, will help to shape the plans for HealthWatch.

HealthWatch England Principles and Practicalities

The meeting of this group was used as a wider session to discuss the operating model for HealthWatch. Among the things agreed were:

- HealthWatch England should provide templates for local HealthWatch organisations to gather information
- HealthWatch England should proactively share information with local HealthWatch organisations
- HealthWatch England does not need regional offices, but will provide local support, including enabling peer support among local HealthWatch organisations

Local HealthWatch (the two local groups have now been combined)

- The Health and Social Care Bill states, 'A local HealthWatch organisation (LHW) is a body corporate'. For an existing LINK to morph into/evolve into a local HealthWatch organisation, the LINK will have to **become** a body corporate. It needs to do this as soon as possible if it hopes to be considered for 'commissioning as LHW' by the local authority.
- The grant-in-aid option or a single-tender option is potentially available to a high performing LINK which is distinguished as having a 'unique capacity' to do the job of being a local HealthWatch organisation.
- There will be no specific guidance documents from the Department of Health concerning local HealthWatch procurement, in contrast to the case when LINKs were coming.
- LINKs need to be aware of some key dates for local authority financial decisions. These are November 2011, grant settlements in local authorities (may be delayed until December) and budget setting, around February 2012.
- Eight Regional Transitional Leads (RTLs) are now in post and have very variable remits. It is expected the role of the RTLs will end in March 2012.

Ruth Marsden

Communication and engagement: a strategy

The communications sub group met recently and were presented with the first phase of the identity work for HealthWatch.

The group reached a view about domain names for HealthWatch. They recommend that the best approach for domain names would be for HealthWatch to come first, followed by the location name, for example www.healthwatchyork.org.uk or www.healthwatchesuffolk.org.uk .

We hope that all local HealthWatch organisations will use the collectively developed identity for HealthWatch. This will help to give HealthWatch a distinctive voice.

Sharing an approach like this will help local HealthWatch to gain from some centrally supported awareness raising. It will also provide highly cost effective tools such as a logo, templates for leaflets and so on, that will save work locally. So, in advance of the final HealthWatch "brand" being shared next year, we suggest that pathfinders and Local Involvement Networks do not develop individual transitional logos or other branded materials. We plan to hold conferences on this work locally early next year. More information about these events will be available on the HealthWatch online community in the next few months. If you would like to join the community please email healthwatch@nunwood.com.

How to get involved in developing HealthWatch

To set up HealthWatch the Care Quality Commission and the Department of Health have set up a joint programme. This is made up of a programme board and an advisory group. To read more about these groups and to read the minutes of the meetings please visit the CQC [website](#).

To ensure people can feed in their views on the development of HealthWatch an online community has been set up for anyone who is interested to feed in their views. If you would like to join the community please email healthwatch@nunwood.com.

If you would like to find out more about the NHS modernisation programme, please visit the DH website at: <http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk>.

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