

**An independent evaluation
of the service provided
by
Healthwatch York in 2018-19
from the
Stakeholders' Perspective**

June 2019

Conducted by

Angela Portz

A E Portz Associates

angela@aeportz.com www.aeportz.com

07392 858958



AE PORTZ ASSOCIATES

Supporting charities and voluntary organisations

Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Context	3
3. Healthwatch York's Mission and Aims	4
4. Purpose and method of the evaluation	4
5. Findings;	5
5.1 Evidence of Healthwatch York improving health and social care services in York	5
5.2 Evidence of Healthwatch York influencing health and social care services in York	6
5.3 Evidence of Healthwatch York meeting its stated aims	7
6. Recommendations	10
6.1 Working together in 2019-20 onwards	10
6.2 Sustainability	14

1. Executive Summary

There is good evidence from stakeholders that Healthwatch York is well-established and respected in the City of York as an organisation that contributes to improving and influencing local health and social care services.

Stakeholders can give specific examples of where Healthwatch York meets its stated aims. They note the impact that Healthwatch York achieves within a finite set of resources and in the context of growing demand for health and social care services.

Stakeholders demonstrate how they value their relationships with Healthwatch York. They have constructive suggestions to further develop partnership working and are supportive of ensuring that Healthwatch York has a sustainable and viable future in the city.

2. Context

Healthwatch York provides the means for local people to influence health and social care services – hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, home care services and many others. Healthwatch York helps people to become involved in shaping these services. It provides information about local services, improving and increasing access; signposts to independent complaints advocacy; listens to views about local services and makes sure these are taken into account when services are planned and delivered.

Healthwatch York has been in place since 2013. It is a project that sits within the independent charity that is York CVS, with a 'Leadership Group' that acts as a steering group/advisory board. Ultimate accountability sits with the Trustees of York CVS.

Healthwatch York operates under a contract from City of York Council, with the equivalent of 3.1 Full Time Equivalent paid staff and approximately 39 volunteers, who carry out roles as Community Champions, Care Home Assessors, Research volunteers, Readability volunteers, Representatives, Enter and View volunteers, Communications volunteers, and members of the Leadership Group.

Recent topics of focus for its work has included Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans+ experiences of health and social care in York, NHS Dentistry, Continuing health care, dementia and mental health.

3. Healthwatch York's Mission and Aims

Healthwatch York's Mission Statement is;

“Healthwatch York puts people at the heart of health and social care services, enabling you to be heard. We believe that together we can help make York better for everyone”.

The aims are;

- Healthwatch York is responsive to the needs of York residents
- Healthwatch York understands what is happening in relation to health and social services in York
- Healthwatch York speaks up about the provision of health and social care services in York
- Healthwatch York uses the reviews, words and stories of service users to show the impact of health and social care services in York
- Healthwatch York involves the public in the work they do
- Healthwatch York advocates for people's active involvement in their health and social care
- Healthwatch York provides an effective service for the people of York using health and social care services
- Healthwatch York reaches new people and partners.

4. Purpose and method and of the evaluation

The aims of the evaluation are to obtain the views of stakeholders and provide specific examples of how Healthwatch York;

- contributes to improving health and social care services in York
- influences health and social care services in York
- meets its stated aims.

In the past 5 years Healthwatch York has conducted an online survey with its stakeholders. For 2018-19 the Healthwatch team decided to take a different approach of commissioning a series of one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders, with the intention of securing greater insight into stakeholders' views. The evaluator was provided with a representative sample of potential interviewees from statutory partners and voluntary and community sector organisations within health and social care.

5. Findings

5.1 Evidence of Healthwatch York improving health and social care services in York

Stakeholders were able to give examples of specific instances where they saw Healthwatch having a direct impact on improvements in health and social care services. These included;

- changes to the way in which people with learning disabilities now access GP services; research led by Healthwatch was deemed to have helped identify improvements in the system for people to access their GP reviews.
- through participation and leadership in the Multiple and Complex Needs Group, Healthwatch was credited with bringing together the right people to look at systems and improve delivery, particularly through the involvement of people with lived experience.
- through convening the Readability Panel to provide a mechanism for trained volunteers to give feedback on documents used by the public.
- by improving access to dental care for people who are homeless.

*Susan Manktelow, Patient Information and Policy Support Administrator,
York Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust*

*"the readability panel provides positive feedback to help us improve our
patient information"*

5.2 Evidence of Healthwatch York influencing health and social care services in York

Stakeholders can provide examples of the influence of Healthwatch York. The organisation has a history of addressing issues for people living with dementia and now has well-established partnerships in place. This is an example of how the ability of Healthwatch York to influence health and social care services in the city takes place over time and in an incremental way, rather than in one discreet year of operation and evaluation. The 'Healthwatch Guide to What's Out There for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers' has become a core resource for organisations who support people with dementia and their families and carers, influencing pathways and referral systems.

Examples were also given to show how partners expect similar levels of influence to become clear in the future, as current work on areas such as Making Every Adult Count (for people with Multiple and Complex needs) develops.

Healthwatch York was also perceived by some as having had significant influence on the development of the city's mental health strategy and assumed to have influence in monitoring changes in the way in which future services will be delivered.

5.3 Evidence of Healthwatch York meeting its stated aims

Healthwatch York is responsive to the needs of York residents

A good example was provided by the Alzheimer's Society who felt that Healthwatch York were responsive to the needs of people with dementia and that a good feedback system was in place. There was a strong sense that information provided by people with dementia was acted on and that people with dementia could see the impact of their feedback in Healthwatch York reports and newsletters.

Margaret Ferguson, Alzheimer's Society

"you always get something back from Healthwatch"

Healthwatch York understands what is happening in relation to health and social services in York

Overall there was recognition that Healthwatch York is 'tuned in' to the health and social care system locally, with examples given of its attendance at a range of key meetings, forums and events in the city. Their position on bodies such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, Mental Health Partnership and a range of other forums is noted and respected.

Stakeholders can report examples of how effective Healthwatch York is in bringing together partners and organisations to collaborate, for example, through the Multiple and Complex Needs Network.

Kelly Cunningham, Service Manager, Changing Lives

"Healthwatch staff are everything you would want from an organisation doing this type of work"

Healthwatch York speaks up about the provision of health and social care services in York

Many interviewees described the role of Healthwatch York as a 'critical friend' to their own organisations and to the local health and social care sector. Indeed, several expressed the wish for Healthwatch York to expand this aspect of its role even further, by providing greater challenge. There is an acknowledgement that this may not always be straightforward for Healthwatch York to implement.

Kyra Ayre, Head of Service - Safeguarding, DOLS, mental health and learning disabilities, City of York Council

"they speak out strongly to represent organisations and the people of York and are in touch with local issues and concerns"

Victoria Binks, Head of Engagement, NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group

"they are the go-to group for us to get constructive feedback and challenge"

Healthwatch York uses the reviews, words and stories of service users to show the impact of health and social care services in York

Healthwatch York now has a well-established system of selecting topics to focus on in depth, and of producing accessible reports on their findings. These reports are developed and produced with the input of people who use services and their stories are integral to the quality and impact of the reports and publications. These reports are clearly well known and used and stakeholders have greater access through these to the voice of people who use services.

Sheila Fletcher, Commissioning Specialist, Adult Mental Health (NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group)

"through their networks they were able to bring their wide-reaching contacts to support my work on adult autism and ADHD"

Healthwatch York involves the public in the work they do

Stakeholders were familiar with the ways in which Healthwatch York utilises volunteers from the local community, whether this be from specific geographical communities or communities of interest. They were described as having networks and routes into communities that others lacked.

Sheila Fletcher, Commissioning Specialist, Adult Mental Health (NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group)

"they ensure the views of people who use our services are heard and have opportunities to participate when services are changing or being reviewed"

Healthwatch York advocates for people's active involvement in their health and social care

York's LGBT Forum clearly view Healthwatch York as a mechanism for advocacy on behalf of a community that is not always heard. The opportunity to provide anonymous feedback via something other than a formal complaints system was very much valued. Numerous examples were given of how people with lived experience were brought 'into the system', for example, through their work as Healthwatch York volunteers, by taking part in forums, panels and other opportunities for involvement.

Jake Furby, York LGBT Forum "they are our advocates and sounding boards"

Healthwatch York provides an effective service for the people of York using health and social care services

Considering the range of aims that Healthwatch York has, and the respect given to its influence and achievements on a fixed and limited budget, it would be a fair assessment to say that the organisation provides an effective service. This report contains numerous examples of how it achieves its aims.

Healthwatch York reaches new people and partners

Stakeholders can give examples of Healthwatch York reaching new people and partners. Specific examples include;

- involvement in the partnership to support people with complex lives
- work on the LGBT+ community's access to healthcare
- research with people with learning disabilities
- improving access to dental services for people who are homeless
- supporting the work of the Connected Communities programme to work with those who commit offences
- supporting people with dementia to navigate services
- work on drug-related deaths and unplanned-detoxes at the hospital.

Stakeholders view Healthwatch York's position within York CVS as a positive means of accessing a wide range of voluntary and community organisations who can themselves provide a greater reach into specific communities.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Working together in 2019-20 onwards

Suggestions for ways in which stakeholders could work more closely with Healthwatch York in the coming year(s) are varied. What is clear is that there is a real appetite for collaboration with Healthwatch York. The feedback can be separated into that which is of a more general nature and that which is specific.

It is recommended that Healthwatch York considers these suggestions, where appropriate enters into more detailed discussions with partners, and uses this as a contribution to their work plan for 2019-20 onwards.

General feedback on Healthwatch York priorities for the coming year

Greater influence

Stakeholders are interested in whether there are ways in which Healthwatch York can work with local and regional Healthwatch to have some influence at a national level. For example, Healthwatch York is seen as an organisation that aims to put people with dementia at the heart of the local system; could this be aggregated with the work of others to have a greater impact?

Several stakeholders commented that whilst Healthwatch York's footprint is the same as City of York Council's, it is not the same as those of other health stakeholders and that there may be occasions when collaborative working with Healthwatch in North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire would be of benefit.

Focus

Stakeholders generally approve of the way in which Healthwatch York focuses on a small number of key topics each year and urge them to resist the temptation to spread themselves too thinly.

Marketing and promotion

Whilst the majority of stakeholders express admiration for the degree of visibility achieved by Healthwatch York, particularly with limited resources, there is some desire to see Healthwatch York make greater use of social media and link in more to events such as awareness weeks, either using

social media or via a physical presence at events. Some feel that frontline staff and practitioners within their organisations still do not have sufficient awareness and understanding of Healthwatch and would be keen to discuss ways to address this.

Use of volunteers

Some stakeholders wonder if there is more potential for the use of volunteers and are interested in knowing more about how Healthwatch York secures appropriate representation of the community within their volunteer base. One suggests that there may be data on this that could be used in Healthwatch York's annual review, to promote and publicise the composition of the volunteer cohort.

Role of Healthwatch York as a critical friend

Many stakeholders would welcome Healthwatch York developing its role as a critical friend even more than they do now, through providing greater challenge to system partners. Some comment that they appreciate this is not easy for Healthwatch York to do but welcome the independence that Healthwatch brings and encourage them to develop this role. This would potentially lead to greater influence within the health and social care system.

Amplifying the voices of those who are seldom heard

This aspect of the work of Healthwatch York is clearly respected by stakeholders, who were keen that it should continue. There is acknowledgement that Healthwatch York provides a valuable outreach into communities that some partners simply do not find easy to access. This was viewed by most stakeholders as a real area of expertise within Healthwatch York.

Role of Healthwatch York in encouraging and enabling co-production

Some suggest that Healthwatch York could become more of a practical conduit for co-production in the city, by creating more bridges so people who wish to do it can access support more easily. Healthwatch York could offer practical advice and guidance, making tools available for wider use.

This would add greater legitimacy when Healthwatch York needs to encourage partners to act.

*Steve Reed, Head of Strategy, York Hospital NHS Foundation Trust:
"they are a strong influence on the growth in co-production in the city; it's becoming a more normal way to work"*

Specific feedback on Healthwatch York priorities for the coming year

Understandably partners have some suggestions that are specific to their own areas of work and accept that only a small number of the following may feature in Healthwatch York's future plans. However, the volume and scope of the suggestions is indicative of how well Healthwatch is perceived by partners and how keen is the appetite for collaboration.

Two areas drew comment from multiple partners.

- **The desire to see Healthwatch York support partners to improve their reach within BME communities in York, and to help partners increase their understanding of the needs of these communities.**

Questions were posed such as;

- How do BME groups access healthcare and if not, why not?
- Is there anything we can do to improve?
- What further support could we give?
- Do we need help mapping community groups, so we know how to reach them?
- How can we use data in the Joint Strategic Needs assessment to better understand these communities and their health inequalities, with the aim of improving services and systems?

There is clearly a willingness to work with Healthwatch to improve the reach into these communities and broaden understanding of their health and social care needs.

- **Healthwatch York to consider its role in the way in which services will be delivered in future at primary care level.**

Healthwatch York was described as having a potentially pivotal role in engaging GPs and Primary Care Networks.

This forthcoming major change to the way in which local services are organised and delivered is seen as a major focus for all partners in the coming years, and it would appear essential that Healthwatch York is at the centre of these developments.

Other suggestions included;

- Conduct a review of services for those who commit offences
- Support a mechanism to replicate the way in which the now defunct Equalities Group in York provided a forum for networking and developing new projects
- Support awareness raising of suicide prevention and crisis care where people are past prevention.
- Maintain support for the work around people with multiple and complex needs.
- Get feedback on the ways in which the city is trying to implement new ways of working around mental health.
- get involved in reviewing the patient information section of the hospital website and assess whether it is readable, accessible, is the documentation easy to find.
- Consider whether the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment points to any pockets of population or health inequalities, that would provide a focus for 2019-20.
- Focus on ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard, particularly around mental health and prevention.

6.2 A sustainable model for the future of Healthwatch York.

It is recommended that Healthwatch York considers the suggestions made by stakeholders for developing a menu of chargeable services.

It is understood and accepted by stakeholders that Healthwatch York operates on a fixed and limited budget for staffing and resources, and there is widespread admiration for what the organisation achieves within its budget. Some stakeholders recognise that in a different economic environment it would be desirable to make additional funds available to meet more of Healthwatch York's running costs, for example by key partners making a regular contribution in addition to the core commissioned contract. As that remains unlikely, stakeholders offered suggestions on other models for Healthwatch York to improve its sustainability. The organisation is viewed as one with experience and expertise that have a marketable value but one that also perhaps does not fully showcase that expertise.

Stakeholders have offered suggestions for how Healthwatch could research and develop an offer of chargeable services. To do this, stakeholders would appear to welcome greater clarity on what services are 'free', that is, included within Healthwatch York's fixed funding arrangements, perhaps by setting clearer boundaries on workload for the coming year. Explaining the limitations of this could help to manage stakeholders' expectations. This could then lead to a menu of chargeable services, such as consultancy, public engagement, research and report writing. While some stakeholders are clear they have no funds to buy in further services, there are others who would welcome this opportunity and would then be able to promote Healthwatch services more widely within their organisations; it is possible there is some hesitancy around raising expectations that may not be met.

Specific suggestions for chargeable products and services included;

- public engagement expertise; consultation and delivery; particularly with seldom heard groups, in particular BME communities.
- provision of local safeguarding training
- research in specific geographical communities and/or communities of interest, to provide detailed insight to inform future service design and delivery

- exploring how their expertise could meet the needs of the commercial sector, such as medical technology and pharmaceutical companies.

Exploration of these suggestions could over time enable Healthwatch York to build capacity and operate within a more sustainable funding model.