

Good Engagement Charter:

Supporting meaningful involvement of patients, public and carers in health and social care in Coventry and Warwickshire
a call to action

2013



Introduction

Why we believe in this Charter

This Charter is based on what local people told us through a survey and focus groups (271 people took part) and sets out the things that people said were most important to them when asked to give their feedback, views or 'get involved' .

People are often asked to 'have their say' about health and social care but how do you know their voice is being heard? Healthwatch will use this Charter to encourage organisations to adopt best practice.

Health and social care services are constantly changing and it is essential that the experiences and opinions of patients and the public help to make sure services are improved for people in Coventry and meet peoples' needs. Healthwatch believes that everyone should have the chance to take part in shaping health and social care in a way that suits them.

What is engagement?

'Engagement' is an overarching term for all forms of activity which involve gathering feedback, opinions and views from people who use services, carers and people who might use services. Therefore engagement might be:

- having a conversation with a service user about their experiences of using services,
- a survey,
- setting up a patient/service user/carers group,
- work to involve people in service redesign,
- or many other activities.

Formal consultation is also a type of 'engagement', but not the only kind.

The Charter

Healthwatch expects the following points to be addressed by organisations that carry out patient and public engagement in Coventry:

- 1. We will be clear about why there is a need to 'engage' with our community/service users**
The reasons for involving people must be clear from the start.
- 2. We will make sure that we work with partners when engaging with our community**
People do not like being asked about the same thing over and over again. A joined-up approach is efficient and increases the likelihood of people taking part.
- 3. We will make sure there is plenty of time for engagement**
Rushed engagement does not tend to work. 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**
Some people like to talk in groups; others prefer to complete an online survey or to tell one person their ideas. We will be inclusive and tailor our activities to the people we are hoping will take part.
- 5. We will be open, honest and transparent when engaging with our community**
Agencies carrying out engagement activity should be open and honest about what can and cannot be influenced - including any constraints and boundaries - giving reasons for this.
- 6. We will make sure that information is accessible by all**
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 feedback when engaging with them**
Results of engagement should be easily accessible to people who wish to view it - especially those people affected by the results of consultation activity.
- 8. We will recognise best practice and make sure that it is used to inform future engagement with our community**
Engagement that has worked well should be celebrated, shared between partners and also be used to develop future engagement activities.
- 9. We will evaluate the engagement process and make sure that any lessons learned are used to make engagement better in the future**
Engagement will be reviewed to see how well it worked and if it has achieved what it set out to do. The process will also be assessed against the standards outlined in this charter.



A call to action

Adopting the charter

We see the Charter as a useful tool to help reflect on what local people think and want when they are asked for their input and views.

There are the following steps to 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 i.e. what you will do differently and work you will undertake to embed the Charter. Ideally this should be one side of A4. You should report to the public on progress against your pledge.
4. Identify someone at board level (Exec or non- Exec) to Champion Good Engagement.

This approach fits very well with the recommendation 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.

Further information

The report of our research into good practice and the views of local people which led to the production of this Charter can be found at:

www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk/engagement-charter