



Southampton Voluntary Services

SVS Briefing Paper



Introduction

Healthwatch is the new independent consumer champion for both health and social care. It will exist at 2 distinct levels – local Healthwatch, at a local area level, and Healthwatch England, at national level.

The aim of local Healthwatch will be to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Local Healthwatch will also provide or signpost people to information to help them make choices about health and care services. It will also provide an independent complaints advocacy service (ICAS) for anyone wishing to pursue a complaint about their NHS treatment or care.

Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England has been set up as sub-committee of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Its role is to be the national voice for people's concerns about health and social care issues. Local experiences will inform its work at a national level through a national network of local Healthwatch organisations which will provide evidence and make recommendations to Healthwatch England.

Local Healthwatch (LHW)

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 set out that local Healthwatch would be established by April 2013 and would take over the statutory functions of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs). Local Healthwatch would become the independent, influential and effective voice of the public, employing its own staff and involving volunteers to ensure local experiences are recognised and voices are heard. It will reach out proactively in communities to engage and involve local people, carrying out statutory functions as laid down by Parliament, keep accounts and make its annual reports available to the public.

Many voluntary sector organisations have been involved with LINKs (SLINK in Southampton) and the relationship between the voluntary sector and Healthwatch should be one of mutual collaboration and support. The form this takes may vary depending on the organisational structure of local Healthwatch. Government regulation states that local Healthwatch organisations will be social enterprises but does not stipulate the form this should be other than it meets the criteria set out in the regulation¹.

Local authorities have been charged by Government with making arrangements for the setting up local Healthwatch.

Healthwatch Southampton

Southampton City Council went through a formal tendering process to establish the local Healthwatch but due to delays in the contracting process had put in place interim arrangements for Healthwatch from 1.4.13 to 30.6.13. From 1st July Healthwatch Southampton will be provided under the auspices of Southampton Voluntary Services which has been commissioned by Southampton City Council to provide this service in the city.

SVS worked in partnership with voluntary organisations locally to develop a model which combines carrying forward the past learning and strengths of SLINK, whilst more clearly defining the strategic direction and volunteering roles and widening the participation of key stakeholders. We see active engagement and involvement of local voluntary organisations and volunteers as key to Healthwatch Southampton's success. In particular we will have formal partnerships and subcontracts with SEAP for provision of the ICAS and with CAB for elements of the outreach advice and information service. Healthwatch Southampton will also work collaboratively with neighbouring LHWs where our local populations access services across local authority boundaries or where specialist services are commissioned over wider areas such as those offered at the UHST General Hospital.

Identifying local Healthwatch

There is a common branding for all Healthwatch organisations so regardless of where people live or organisations operate it should be easy to identify the local Healthwatch. They are all called Healthwatch followed by the local area name, e.g. Healthwatch Southampton and Healthwatch Hampshire.

There is a local Healthwatch organisation for every upper tier local authority area, i.e. that has responsibility for adult and children's services; and you can find your local Healthwatch by going to <http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/find-your-local-organisation>.

Healthwatch Southampton Functions

The functions of Healthwatch have been broken down into the following key elements. The voluntary sector will have opportunities to contribute to and support Healthwatch Southampton in a variety of ways. Suggestions are included below each of the functions.

- Gathering views and understanding the experiences of people who use services, carers and the wider community
 - Promoting Healthwatch to members or users so that they are aware of the opportunities to get involved
 - Making use of your own organisations activities and networks to gather information which could contribute to the work of Healthwatch
- Making people's views known
 - Ensuring that any specialist knowledge that users of services that you work with are able to add to evidence gathered by Healthwatch around a specific issue.
- Promoting and supporting the involvement of people in the commissioning and provision of local care services and how they are scrutinized
 - Volunteers will play an important role in Healthwatch's work and organisations working with people who have specialist knowledge will be a valuable asset in helping to shape health and care services.
- Recommending investigation or special review of services via Healthwatch England or directly to the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
 - There are opportunities for organisations supporting people with specialist conditions to work collaboratively with Healthwatch to help understand the experiences of these service users.
- Providing advice and information about access to services and support for making informed choices
 - Healthwatch Southampton will be delivering this service in partnership with CAB outreach volunteers and there is a role for the wider voluntary sector in ensuring that its members and users and the wider community know how to access this service.
- Making the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England and providing a steer to help it carry out its role as national champion
 - The voluntary sector can play a role in supporting LHW to provide well evidenced information to HW England by collaborating around specific issues of concern.

NHS Complaints Advocacy

NHS Complaints Advocacy has previously been commissioned separately but ICAS is now combined within the overarching Healthwatch Southampton contract. SVS will subcontract this element to SEAP, the previous local provider, and will have a close working relationship with SEAP in order to gather data to inform evidence about health provision. Healthwatch Southampton will also signpost people to this service.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Health and Wellbeing Boards have been operating in a shadow form since 2011 and like Healthwatch formally came into being on 1st April 2013. Local Healthwatch has a statutory place on the Health and Wellbeing board. Like local Healthwatch, Health and Wellbeing Boards have been set up in every local authority area which has responsibility for adult and children's services.

Health and wellbeing boards (HWBs) have been set up to enable the better integration of health and social care services through a more collaborative approach to shaping how services are delivered.

The local Healthwatch representative is seen as having a key role in bringing the views of those using health and care services but will also have a role as a member of the HWB taking part in its decision making. Local Healthwatch is also seen by many HWBs as having a key role to play in the engagement of the wider public with HWBs. There is no statutory requirement for the voluntary sector to have a place on the HWB and despite SVS lobbying Southampton does not currently have voluntary sector representation but we will continue to make the case for this to be put in place alongside the informed consumer voice that Healthwatch Southampton will bring.

The HWB is required to produce a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the local area and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a key process by which the Strategy will be informed. Healthwatch Southampton will play an important role along with SVS for the the voluntary sector in informing the evidence base for the JSNA and ultimately the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Healthwatch Southampton is being set up at a time of considerable public expenditure spending constraints and severe pressures on public services which is having profound impact for local consumers. There will be many expectations of Healthwatch Southampton services but finite resources to meet all those so it will be important to ensure that there is a clear operational framework, strategic direction and prioritised work plan agreed and set for the service by the Strategic Group which will be established by SVS to oversee the delivery of Healthwatch locally, aided by an advisory group, and local members' views.

To have any chance of delivering genuine change Healthwatch Southampton needs the support of the voluntary and community sector, and SVS as its umbrella body, on a mutually beneficial basis so that the interests and concerns of our sector's beneficiaries and the people for whom we all work as well as the wider public engagement are reflected and taken forward to improve local service delivery and experiences. SVS hopes therefore that local voluntary organisations will continue to support it and Healthwatch Southampton as we move forward.

Opportunities for involvement

There will be 3 routes through which voluntary organisation can be involved

- Becoming members of Healthwatch Southampton, as well as SVS hopefully.

- Nominating and electing members to the Strategic Group
- Through involvement in specific work streams and focused activity, the organisational equivalent of volunteering roles for individuals.

The Strategic Group will be comprised of 9 members as follows –

- 3 members elected by the individual members (2 nominated from Southampton city residents, 1 from non city members)
- 3 members elected by voluntary sector member organisations
- 3 appointed members (1 by SVS Executive Committee, 2 to balance gaps in equalities or skills mix)

All members will go through a formal application process and vetting by a Nominations Committee to ensure they have the requisite skills, knowledge, and competencies to fulfil the role and commitment required. All members will be required to undertake a Disclosure and baring service check and any one disbarred from acting as a charity trustee, Company Director or not meeting the HMRC fit and proper person criteria will be ineligible to act as a strategic group member although other volunteering roles might be suitable for them subject to suitable risk assessment for the role.

In the formation period interim arrangement will be put in place until the first AGM when the full electoral process can be completed. Early elections will be held for the 3 voluntary sector constituency members and 3 previously elected members of the outgoing Slinks steering group will fulfil the individual members representatives role on a temporary basis.

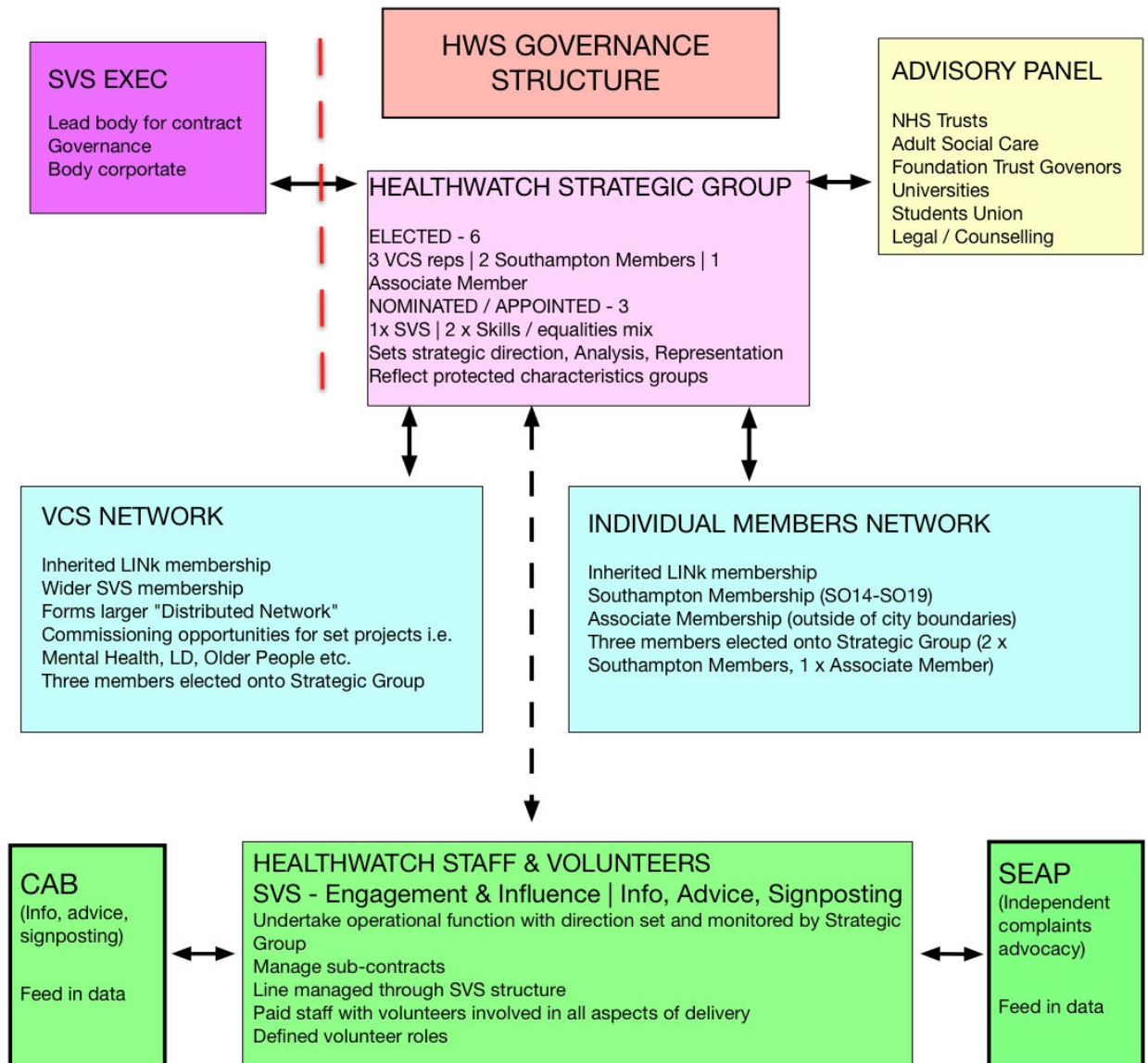
Eligibility for individual members election will be open to anyone over 18 years living in Southampton or using health and social care services in the city although with the following exceptions -

- Health and Social care providers, and their employees, whose main function is to provide services to local Southampton citizens
- People who work in the commissioning of, or make strategic policy affecting , health and social care services in the city
- All board members of the city CCG, any NHS provider organisation and any SCC Councillors

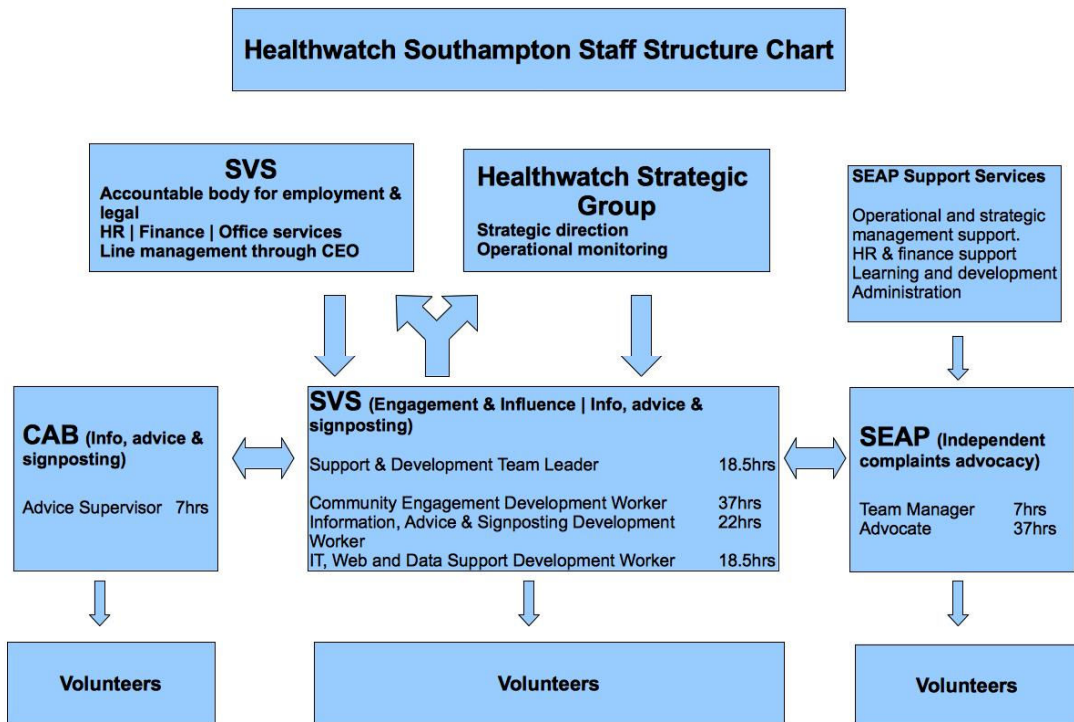
Eligibility for voluntary sector elected members will be to meet the same skills and competency requirements but not necessarily to be local residents or current service users. SVS will commence the election process for voluntary sector members at the earliest opportunity within the first 2 months of operation and all Healthwatch member organisations will be notified of the process imminently.

Healthwatch Southampton Diagrams

HWS Governance Structure



Healthwatch Southampton Staff Structure



HWS Offer to Southampton's Diverse Communities

