

# Communications Strategy 2021/2023

# Contents

Contents.....	2
Our mission, vision and values.....	4
What we do .....	4
The purpose of this document .....	7
Future goals.....	7
Target audience.....	9
Communication mechanisms.....	11
Key Messages .....	14
How does Healthwatch Halton work? .....	15
Our communication aims.....	15
Digital communications.....	16
Social media .....	17
Regular updates.....	18
Publications.....	18
Measuring impact.....	19
Equality and Diversity.....	21

## Who are we?

Healthwatch Halton is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice. Last year, the Healthwatch network helped nearly a million people like you have your say and get the support you need.

Healthwatch Halton is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We're here to listen to the issues that really matter to people in Halton and to hear about your experiences of using local health and social care services. We're entirely independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential.

Healthwatch uses your feedback to better understand the challenges facing the NHS and other care providers and we make sure your experiences improve health and care for everyone – locally and nationally. We can also help you to get the information and advice you need to make the right decisions for you and to get the support you deserve.

## Our mission, vision and values

Our vision is a society where the voice of the local people is listened to and all we can all get the health and care we need.

Our mission is to make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.

This means that:

- People help shape health and social care services
- People influence the services they receive personally
- People hold services to account when things go wrong

We will achieve this by:

- Listening to local people, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them
- Influencing those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and, in the future
- Informing and empowering people to get the most from their health and social care services
- Working with other voluntary organisations to champion service improvement and to empower local people to speak out.

### Our values

- **Listening:** We recognise the value of listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including:** We value inclusivity. We acknowledge that everyone must be included in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing:** We value the insight that's gained from Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care
- **Acting:** We act on feedback and drive change. Listening has to positively affect outcomes and influence important decisions about people's care.
- **Partnering:** We value strong partnerships with health and care services, and the voluntary and community sector to make care better whilst retaining our independence

### What we do

- We listen to the views of people about local health and care services, and share those views with those involved in commissioning, providing, and monitoring health and social care services
- We promote and enable the involvement of local people to take part in the commissioning and provision of local health and care services and how they are monitored
- We work closely with our providers and commissioners to undertake projects on health and social care services to produce an independent perspective on how those services are delivered from a patient user experience. We write a report on the project and make recommendations about how the services could or should be improved and ask for a response from the provider
- We have powers to carry out 'enter and view' on premises where publicly funded health or social care is provided to the residents of Halton
- We can recommend investigation or special review of services, either via Healthwatch England, or directly to the Care Quality Commission
- We have a seat on Halton Borough Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, ensuring that the views and experiences of patients or carers have had the opportunity to influence the development of new strategies or a change in the way a service is being provided
- We provide advice and information to the public about accessing local health and social care services, so they can make informed choices about which services to use and how to access them
- We support people on where they can go for help, which empowers them and when they want to resolve a complaint about a health or social care service they have used.

## **Our goals**

### **1. Supporting you to have your say**

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.

### **2. Providing a high-quality service**

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high-quality service and to understand the difference that their views make.

### **3. Ensuring your views help improve health and care**

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.

## **Our objectives**

1. To find out the experiences of people needing or using health, public health and social care services.
2. To seek the views of those who are seldom heard and reduce the barriers they face.
3. To act on what we hear to improve health and care policy and practice.
4. To build on and share our expertise in engagement.
5. To be a strong, well-governed organisation and use our resources for the greatest impact.

## The purpose of this document

This communications strategy provides a framework for the delivery of effective communications which are clear, appropriate and help the organisation achieve its goals.

Effective communications will help to:

- Increase awareness of Healthwatch Halton and its work
- Increase Healthwatch Halton's reputation as an independent, professional and credible organisation
- Continuously build meaningful two-way communication with the public, patients and carers to ensure they have the knowledge and understanding to share their views which will help influence the shaping of health and social care services in Halton
- Ensure that we work closely with seldom heard groups to champion their voices and enable them to be heard
- Ensure we work closely with commissioners, so services are designed with the people in Halton who use those services.

## Future goals

Over the past 8 years Healthwatch Halton has built a strong and credible presence with providers and the public, but there is still much to be achieved, especially in the rapidly changing landscape of health and social care. Over the next year we are committed to improving communications across all channels and increasing public engagement participation across all work streams.

Healthwatch Halton aim to achieve this by establishing closer working relationships with their strategic partners, like: Halton Borough Council, NHS Halton Clinical Commissioning Group, One Halton, local Health and Social Care service providers, and the Cheshire & Merseyside Health Care Partnership.

There will also be increased collaboration with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) and communities of common interest.

By working with these partners, we will enhance the profile of the Healthwatch Halton and improve its reach, enabling all members of the public to be well-informed and involved in work streams.

We will look to strengthen our feedback loop, ensuring impact and outcomes are reported to patients, service users, stakeholders and the wider public



## Target audience

### **Our key stakeholders include:**

#### **People living, or working, in Halton**

Adults and older adults  
Children and young people  
Seldom heard (such as protected characteristics)  
Potential volunteers

#### **Voluntary organisations**

Those doing similar work, (i.e.: patient voice, health, social care)  
Those working with people Healthwatch Halton wants to hear from  
Social groups (i.e. for specific conditions or demographics, communities of interest)

#### **Commissioners of Health and Social Care Services**

NHS Halton & Warrington  
One Halton Place  
Halton Borough Council (including public health)  
NHS England (North West)

#### **Political partners**

Local Councillors  
Members of Parliament

#### **Media**

Local and regional broadcast and print

#### **Healthwatch Halton**

Staff and Healthwatch Halton Advisory Board  
Healthwatch Volunteers  
Healthwatch Enter & View authorised representatives

## **Providers of publicly-funded Health and Social Care Services**

NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts – (Warrington & Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, St Helens & Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Merseycare NHS FT, Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS FT)

Registered social care providers

GPs

Pharmacist

NHS Dentists

Ophthalmologists

## **Organisations**

Halton Borough Council

Health Policy Performance Board (OSC)

Health and Wellbeing Board

Local Primary Care Networks

Mid Mersey Local Medical Committee

Mid Mersey Local Dental Committee

Halton, St Helens & Knowsley Local Pharmaceutical Committee

Neighbouring Local Healthwatch

Healthwatch England

Care Quality Commission

Local and regional broadcast and print

## Our Communication Aims

**Aim 1: For the public to be aware of Healthwatch Halton and to see the value of seeking advice from us or sharing their views with us.**

**Objective 1:** To increase by 10% year on year, the number of people sharing experiences with us or accessing our advice and information.

**Aim 2: For professionals (Commissioners and service managers, senior health and care leaders, front-line staff), to be aware of Healthwatch Halton and our role and see the value in supporting our objectives.**

**Objective 2:** To increase by 5% year on year the number of our recommendations actioned by services.

**Aim 3: For stakeholders to be aware of Healthwatch Halton and the service we provide and see the value in supporting our objectives.**

**Objective 3:** To increase by 5% year on year the number of organisations and influencers supporting the promotion of our campaigns.

**Aim 4: For our volunteers to value being part of Healthwatch Halton and to see the value of working together to achieve our objectives.**

**Objective 4:** 85% of our volunteers think that our work is valuable and makes a difference to the local community.

## Communication mechanisms

Healthwatch Halton will also undertake stakeholder mapping to consider the communications needs of all stakeholders when working on specific projects.

The following general mechanisms for communications will be available:

### Website

Healthwatch Halton has continued to update its website with the launch of an updated site in May 2022. The website will continue to be a source of information to the public and residents.

### Social media

Social media will be used for information sharing from Healthwatch Halton and other sources, e.g. One Halton Place, ICP, local authority, NHS Trusts, and voluntary organisations. This will include communicating about event promotion, to engage specific audiences as part of projects and to showcase Healthwatch Halton's work and achievements.

### Publications

Healthwatch Halton will produce a range of publicity and information material, including leaflets, posters and reports that will be available electronically, through its website, and as hard (printed) copies.

### Other organisations' newsletters and websites

Healthwatch Halton will actively seek to get information into other organisations' newsletters and onto their websites (e.g.: voluntary sector organisations, health and social care providers and commissioners).

### Campaigns and events

Healthwatch Halton will arrange and support campaigns and events on a variety of health and social care related topics.

## **Media relations**

Healthwatch Halton will take a proactive approach to the media, offering regular contact to help reporters and editors understand the organisation and to develop working relationships with key broadcast and print media.

## **Focused engagement events**

Healthwatch Halton will hold focused engagement events, online and face to face, in order to communicate with specific groups about their experience of services e.g. mental health focus groups or young people focus groups.

## **Meetings, forums & user groups**

Representatives from Healthwatch Halton (staff and volunteers) will attend other organisations' meetings to raise awareness and hear people's views about health and social care

When the Healthwatch Halton Advisory Board holds its meetings in public, it will make the agendas, minutes, and public papers available through its website

## **Direct contact and signposting service**

Access to the Healthwatch Halton signposting and information service (website, telephone, email, social media) will be communicated throughout Halton to help people choose the right service that they need.

## Key Messages

To help raise awareness and develop an understanding of Healthwatch Halton's role, key messages have been developed for staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

### Our key messages are as follows:

- Healthwatch Halton is the independent local champion for people who use health and social care services. We believe that health and social care providers can best improve services by listening to people's experiences.
- Healthwatch Halton aims to improve local health and social care services for people who use them today, and to help shape them for anyone who might need them in future.

### Our core beliefs

- We believe that health and social care providers can best improve services by listening to people's experiences.
- We believe that everyone in society needs to be included in the conversation. Especially those whose voices aren't being listened to.
- We believe that comparing lots of different experiences helps us to identify patterns and learn what is and isn't working.
- We believe that feedback has to lead to change. Listening for listening's sake is not enough.
- We believe that we must always remain independent and impartial while working with partners to get things done.

### Our values

- **Listening:** We recognise the value of listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including:** We value inclusivity. Listening to the first-hand experiences of diverse groups improves care for everyone.
- **Analysing:** We value the insight that's gained from analysing many different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting:** We act on feedback and drive change. Listening has to positively affect outcomes and influence important decisions about people's care.
- **Partnering:** We value strong partnerships with care providers and Government – serving as the public's independent advocate.

## How does Healthwatch Halton work?

Above all, we help people to be heard and are there for anyone in Halton. We take extra care to reach out to communities who are least heard, supporting them to have a voice. We have influence because we use evidence from the public to back up what we say, and we put forward ideas for change in a constructive way. We want patients, service users, their families, carers and the public to be involved from the start to the end of planning any service if they will be affected by it, working in partnership with professionals to get the best possible result

- Healthwatch Halton is independent of the NHS, local authority and central government.
- Healthwatch Halton makes a difference to the people who contact us and to the wider community, helping to change services for the better.

## Our communication aims

While one communication channel may be perfect for one person, it may be completely inappropriate for another. By using multiple forms of different media, we aim to overcome barriers to communication which can include (not exhaustive):

- Physical distance
- Technical ability
- Language and culture
- Reading level
- Disability

## Digital communications

Healthwatch Halton's website (<http://www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/>) is an important part of our information system and integral to ensuring local people know about us and our work.

We will ensure the website:

- Allows people to feedback about local health and care provision in an easy way
- Features regular updates to our latest news – that is interesting and relevant for our target audiences
- Allows people to sign up for our e-bulletins
- Allows people to register as volunteers
- Promotes our outcomes, latest news, documents and reports
- Promotes our information and signposting service
- Includes a listing of public events and meetings
- Is professional, visually appealing, kept up to date and is easy to navigate.
- Features content to help people understand our role and purpose
- Ensures transparency by publishing the names of our Board members and staff
- Features a privacy policy that outlines the way in which we will use information submitted to Healthwatch Halton via the website
- Enables people to talk to us about our organisation
- Has active links to relevant content and features opportunities for people to be involved in our work.



## Social media

We realise that having a strong social media presence is essential to promoting Healthwatch Halton's work. Use of established social media platforms enables Healthwatch to communicate with a vibrant, online community around local health and social care issues.

Healthwatch Halton operate the following forms of social media:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube

These platforms are used to:

- Provide information on our current activity
- Encourage people to share their views about health and social care services
- Provide clear messages about our service
- Encourage participation and share the outcomes of those projects
- Share information about our own and other organisations events/meetings
- Share our partners messages e.g. those related to the health and wellbeing agenda or integrated services
- Share information about health and social care services delivery.

Healthwatch Halton recognise that care should always be taken when using social networking at any time, because inappropriate comments can adversely affect the reputation of our organisation, even if it's not directly referenced.

We have a Social Media Usage Policy that directs us on how we use and manage our social media accounts.

## Regular updates

People can have the option of signing up with an email address to receive our e-bulletin.

The purpose of the e-bulletin is to share interactive updates about our latest work and outcomes to encourage involvement from local people and partners. Content will also include copy that invites people to comment and share their views with us.

## Publications

All publications will include a date of the publication and contact details. They will also comply with our branding guidelines (available on request), which specifies our colour palette and appropriate use of the Healthwatch logo and other visual elements.

## Measuring impact

It is important for Healthwatch Halton to continually evaluate the impact of our communications to ensure best use of our resources. We will do this in several ways.

The impact of this strategy will be measured through:

- Stakeholder and public awareness of Healthwatch Halton and its achievements
- Measuring the stories/experiences being told to Healthwatch Halton on a quarter-to-quarter period
- Feedback from our stakeholders
- Website usage – unique visits and pages viewed
- Social media activities
- E-bulletin – number of opens and click throughs
- Mapping our stakeholders to evidence where and who we have reached
- Attendance at Healthwatch Halton meetings and events
- Analysis of our media coverage

**Note:** It is important to recognise that we can only monitor known coverage. We know however that a significant amount of communication can take place where we have no presence or means by which we can record it.

This might include:

- Word-of-mouth
- Meetings/events where we are not present
- Circulation of our materials within other networks e.g. further circulation of our newsletter beyond our own contact lists
- Reliance on other sources to feature our information. For example, this might include quote requests from the local media whereby they have subsequently chosen not to include our information
- Features on other websites

- Publication readership: We are given estimates as to the total of people reached but in reality, the readership of publications could be significantly higher or lower than the estimate
- Distribution of our leaflets beyond the places where they have been left.

## Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity for us is about putting people at the heart of the work we do.

We are committed to being inclusive, fair and equitable to all. Equality and Diversity is about:

- How and what we procure and commission
- How we engage, communicate with, and respond to people
- How we communicate, listen to, treat and engage with our staff and volunteers; and
- How we hold providers to account to ensure services are personal, fair and diverse.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced Public Sector Equality Duties for nine protected characteristics, often referred to as equality groups or protected groups.

The protected characteristics are:

- |                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Race                | • Age                            |
| • Sex                 | • Disability                     |
| • Gender reassignment | • Sexual orientation             |
| • Religion or belief  | • Pregnancy and maternity        |
|                       | • Marriage and civil partnership |

In addition to the groups protected by the Equality Act 2010 we will also proactively consider other vulnerable and seldom heard groups. We will be mindful of the NHS Equality Delivery System (EDS2) in ensuring providers improve the services they commission or provide for their local communities, ensuring that they consider health inequalities in their localities of operation.

**Call us: 0300 777 6543**

# **We're Healthwatch**

**Tell us what you think  
of local services.**

**We're here to help make it better**

-  **Care homes**
-  **Community services**
-  **GP Surgeries**
-  **Mental Health services**
-  **Pharmacies**
-  **Carers at home**
-  **Dentists**
-  **Hospitals**
-  **Opticians**



**[www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk)**

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