

# Decision Making: Policy and procedures for all Staff, Board and Volunteers

## Policy Statement

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire makes its decisions in an open and transparent way and ensures the interests of the people of Central Bedfordshire are always put first. This policy and associated procedures outline the steps taken to ensure decisions are evidence based and lead to substantive impact in the community.

The governing regulations and standards are:

1. The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 - referred to as Regulation 40 throughout this document.
2. Freedom of Information Act 2000.
3. Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles).

This policy applies to all relevant decisions made by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire as an employer will meet its obligations in ensuring that all Staff, Board and Volunteers receive adequate information, instruction, and training in order to understand this policy and its implementation

## 1. Relevant decisions

Regulation 40 requires Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to have in place and publish procedures for making relevant decisions. Relevant decisions include:

- How to undertake our activities.
- Which health and care services we are looking at covering with our activities.
- The amounts we will spend on our activities.
- Whether to request information.
- Whether to make a report or a recommendation.
- Which premises to Enter and View and when those premises are to be visited.
- Whether to refer a matter to overview and scrutiny committee.
- Whether to report a matter concerning our activities to another person.
- Any decisions about sub-contracting.

Relevant decisions do not include day to day activity that may be required to carry out exploratory work prior to making a relevant decision.

## **2. Who may make such decisions?**

The Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Board will be responsible for making relevant decisions. The Board will delegate some of the relevant decision making to the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, for example, day to day operational activity and pieces of work which do not have a substantive impact on staff or financial resources.

All relevant decisions, including those delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting at which the decision was made. The minutes of all Board meetings held in public are published on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's website once they have been agreed by the Board as being a correct record of the meeting concerned.

Once a decision has been made, the staff team is responsible for implementation and delivery, with an agreed reporting process to the Board.

The Board of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will reconsider a decision where new data has become available, or if circumstances change, which might prompt it to reach a different decision, or where there is evidence that this decision-making process was not followed.

As a private company limited by guarantee, decision making within Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is also covered in our Articles of Association.

## **3. Involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions**

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Board is composed solely of lay persons, which may include a person who is a health or social care professional, and volunteers (a person who is not a paid employee of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire). Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire intends to secure broad based views on its activities wherever possible, and involves others, particularly lay people and volunteers in its decision making.

## **4. How are decisions made?**

The potential scope of the work of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is vast - it has a responsibility for health and social care services for all adults, children, and young people in the Central Bedfordshire local authority area with particular reference to those who are most vulnerable or may be excluded. This means Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has to prioritise the issues it focuses on. The main sources to inform our work programme are likely to come from:

- People's experiences of health and social care services that they share with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

- Evidence Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire proactively collects about specific areas of concern through the stories and enquiries it hears directly, including deliberative research, public surveys, and polls.
- National and local data sets that evidence issues affecting large numbers of the local population and the most excluded.

This list is not exhaustive and other relevant sources of data will be considered.

In order to prioritise, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Board will carefully consider all sources of information and decide where Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire can add most value. Areas to be considered include:

- That the issues fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire delivers to its statutory remit.
- How much the issue matters to local people, it must be something they care about as Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is here to be the voice of people in health and social care.
- How much change Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire can bring about. This enables us to make sure we are choosing areas where we can have the greatest impact. This is important to deliver the greatest return for our budget.
- Does the influence for change need to come from Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire so we are not focusing on things that others can do more easily and effectively.
- Finally, the Board of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will consider our work as a full set of priorities, as together they need to have the greatest impact for people using health and social care services.

Board meetings (other than Working Board Meetings) are open to the public, and minutes recording decisions will be available via Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's website.

## **5. Dealing with breaches of any procedure referred to in this policy document, including circumstances in which a breach would be referred to the local authority.**

If a decision is taken in the name of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire without authorisation in the manner set out in this policy document, the Board will determine what action is needed. This may be to either approve the decision retrospectively, or to reverse the decision.

If the breach of the agreed procedure is considered to have also breached the contract between Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and the Local Authority, it will be reported to the Local Authority and further action agreed between the Local Authority and Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

In each eventuality, actions will be minuted and published on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's website.

## **6. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement**

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is committed to ensuring all decisions made are free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, nationality, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will monitor this policy in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any particular group of individuals and take action accordingly.

## **7. Procedures**

Reference to 'Board' incorporates Advisory Boards where the Local Healthwatch is hosted and Governing Boards where the Local Healthwatch is standalone. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire undertakes to carry out the following procedures:

1. Publish Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's most up to date policy documents on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's website
2. Ensure all Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire staff read the policy documents at least once per year to refresh understanding and awareness of the need for open and transparent decision making.
3. Publish minutes from Board meetings held in public where decisions are made in a timely manner on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's website. Where decisions are made outside of Board meetings, they will be ratified at the subsequent Board meeting.
4. Review and obtain Board approval for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Decision Making Policy periodically.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The effectiveness of this policy and procedure will be monitored and amended as and when necessary by the Chief Executive Officer. Significant changes will require the approval of the Board of Directors. The policy will also be reviewed periodically as part of a continuing review of organisational policies.

The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire as soon as is practicable.

Policy review date: December 2022