

Proposed changes to Healthwatch South Gloucestershire

Consultation Document

www.southglos.gov.uk



Introduction

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire was first created in 2013 and is designed to gather views and experiences of local people using health and social care services, influence decision makers on their behalf, and give them a say in how local services are changing. It is currently run by a charity called The Care Forum. It costs £103,473 per year, which is paid for by South Gloucestershire Council. The Council receives money from the Government to pay for services like Healthwatch but over the last few years this money has become less and less. From April next year, South Gloucestershire Council won't have enough money to pay for all the services it funded this year, so it has to decide what to spend less money on.

The Council believes that to spend about 50% less on Healthwatch will have the least negative impact on people in South Gloucestershire and that the impact would be worse if we chose to spend less money on other services instead, such as support services for carers and people with disabilities. Now the Council wants to hear your views to make sure the right decision is being made for the people in South Gloucestershire.

What is Healthwatch supposed to do?

Healthwatch was created by Part 5 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. There is a national body, Healthwatch England, and a local organisation for each local council in England with social care responsibilities, which is local Healthwatch, or in our area Healthwatch South Gloucestershire.

Healthwatch is a statutory service, meaning the Council has to provide it by law and the law describes what Healthwatch needs to do, which is:

1. Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services;
2. Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved;
3. Obtaining the views of local people regarding their needs for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known;
4. Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and providers of care services, and people responsible for managing or scrutinising local care services and shared with Healthwatch England.
5. Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services

6. Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved; and sharing these views with Healthwatch England.
7. Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission to conduct special reviews or investigations (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, making such recommendations direct to the CQC); and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about particular issues.
8. Providing Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively.

Examples of what Healthwatch South Gloucestershire has done to make a difference

- Healthwatch South Gloucestershire heard from people with learning difficulties that the annual health check that they should receive doesn't always happen. Healthwatch told South Gloucestershire CCG who started monitoring this more closely and encouraging GPs to do more
- Healthwatch heard that the public feel there is a lack of information about GP based minor injury services in South Gloucestershire. Healthwatch told South Gloucestershire CCG who encouraged GP surgeries to ensure this information is on their websites and known to GP reception staff.
- Healthwatch South Gloucestershire heard from people in a care home that said they have two local GPs visiting regularly, but arranging for a dentist to visit could be difficult. To help tackle this staff were provided with some training from a dental nurse.
- Healthwatch South Gloucestershire challenged a care home to provide a greater and more diverse range of activities, including outdoor activities and especially those suited to male residents. They returned to the home to see if the recommendations had been acted upon and they found a bingo game underway, someone being supported with knitting and a gentleman colouring. They also observed a notice board of planned activities for the week.

Update 03/07/2018: Further information

Volunteers of the Healthwatch South Gloucestershire Executive Board have provided further information to illustrate the kind of work that they undertake in their role for South Gloucestershire

[1] A number of Enter & View visits (inspection visits) to Care Homes over the past four years with evidence based recommendations made, responses from Care Homes, plus evaluation visits made afterwards, demonstrating changes having been made.

[2] Healthwatch South Gloucestershire was shortlisted to the final seven for a national award made by Healthwatch England for the first year of Care Home visits.

[3] Collaboration with Healthwatch Bristol in Enter & View visits to mental health facilities.
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[4] A voice given to those who are seldom heard - deaf and hard of hearing, people with visual impairments, travellers and gipsies.
[5] Ensuring that a local pharmacy complied with the law by asking them to build a ramp at their entrance for use by people with disabilities.
[6] Working with students at UWE and Young People's Healthwatch.
[7] Membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board
[8] Membership of the South West Clinical Senate Citizen's Assembly and of the Senate Council.
[9] Delivery of an Exercise Poster, devised by volunteers, to all Care Homes for Elderly Persons and an impact survey carried out afterwards.
[10] Creation of " <i>Hivewatch</i> ", a partnership between Healthwatch South Gloucestershire and The Hive Avon, a charity that supports people with learning disabilities to bring specialist knowledge of learning disabilities into Enter and View visits.
[11] Annual Care Home surveys carried out.
[12] Volunteers undertaking PLACE (Patient-led assessments of a care environment) inspections for North Bristol NHS Trust
[13] Speaking at conferences and workshops
[14] Participation in a range of Public and Patient Involvement groups.
[15] Consideration and challenging local health provider's annual Equalities Reports and Quality Assessment Accounts.
[16] Feedback / Feedforward Reports

How can Healthwatch South Gloucestershire still work with less money?

Clinical Commissioning Groups or CCGs are the organisations who are responsible for local health services. Very recently the CCGs for South Gloucestershire, Bristol and North Somerset started working together. South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol Council and North Somerset Council work together on many projects where it makes sense to do so. Therefore South Gloucestershire Council is suggesting that Healthwatch South Gloucestershire links with Healthwatch Bristol so that some money can be saved by not doing things twice. We are also talking to North Somerset Council to see if there is opportunity to work jointly there as well.

The proposal is that there will still be a Healthwatch South Gloucestershire so that local views can still be heard as South Gloucestershire views and are not lost amongst views that are only relevant to Bristol or North Somerset. But there are some things that will be the same in both places and some things could be done by the same people working on both areas. With the three CCGs across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire have now combined to form a single CCG so there are likely to be even more times ahead when it makes sense for Healthwatch groups to be linked.

Linking Healthwatch South Gloucestershire with Healthwatch Bristol (and potentially Healthwatch North Somerset) should save some money but it is unlikely to save enough money to mean the service carries on as it has before. The service will need to change and as part of this consultation the Council will be working with some of the organisations who run Healthwatch across the country to discuss different ways of adjusting to less money. This could be by focusing only on the areas of most concern to the people of South Gloucestershire or focusing on the areas that are likely to have the most impact. This process of talking to the market makes sure the Council has the right knowledge about what would work and what wouldn't work so that later, when organisations apply to do the work, the Council is able to judge the best offer on the table.

Depending on the feedback at the end of this consultation, South Gloucestershire Council will quickly start the process of rearranging Healthwatch services as described. This will involve advertising the details of the new service and asking organisations to apply for the work. South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol City Council (and North Somerset Council if they choose to link up as well) will then work together to mark the applications and choose the organisation to run the service from April 2019.

What if the people of South Gloucestershire don't want the Council to spend less on Healthwatch?

We currently spend £103,473 per year on Healthwatch South Gloucestershire. By joining with Healthwatch Bristol (and potentially North Somerset), we are aiming to provide the service next year for in the region of half this amount. It is our belief that Healthwatch can still run on this smaller budget and it will save the Council around £50,000 per year.

If the people of South Gloucestershire don't want to spend less on Healthwatch then we would have to find £50,000 from other community support services, such as carers support services and support services for people with disabilities. Many community support services are paid much less money than Healthwatch South Gloucestershire so we would have to take money from a lot of them before we made up the £50,000. Some of these services have already been reduced. There is a high risk that more reductions would mean some community support services would struggle or cease to exist.

While South Gloucestershire Council would prefer to continue with Healthwatch as it is now, the loss of money from Government forces the Council to choose something to spend less on. It is this Council's opinion that to reduce spending on Healthwatch will prevent the loss of services to individuals who possibly couldn't cope without them.

What if the people of South Gloucestershire don't want Healthwatch South Gloucestershire to be linked to Bristol or North Somerset?

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire would have to work even harder to cope with less money or the Council would need to choose some other support services to pay less so that Healthwatch South Gloucestershire could afford to exist on its own. There is a risk that reducing these "other support services" would have more of a direct impact on individuals in South Gloucestershire.

What happens next?

We will read and analyse all the feedback we receive. Then we will write a consultation report summarising all the feedback and this report will be used by South Gloucestershire Council to decide what to do:

1. Go ahead with the plan described.
2. Link the Healthwatch groups to achieve efficiencies but don't reduce Healthwatch funding - Look again at all our services in South Gloucestershire and choose some other services to save money on.
3. Don't link the Healthwatch groups: Go ahead with spending plans but find other services to reduce to pay extra cost of a stand-alone service.

How to have your say:

- Complete our online survey on our dedicated consultation page: <https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/consult.ti/Healthwatch>
- Complete a paper survey; download and print a copy from our website or ask for one from your local library or One Stop Shop. Hand in your completed survey to a library or post it to us for free – no stamp required – at the address below.
- Telephone: 01454 862356 to talk to us or leave a message
- Email: consultation@southglos.gov.uk
- Write to us: *Freepost RTXL-YJXJ-BXEX, South Gloucestershire Council, Corporate Research & Consultation Team, Council offices, Badminton Road, Yate, BRISTOL, BS37 5AF*

We will be planning to visit GP surgeries to talk to patients but we won't advertise this as we don't want to bring anyone into a GP surgery apart from those who need to see a GP. This is just our way of making sure we get to as many people as possible. So if you see us, please come and talk to us but if not, please use one of the other ways of telling us what you think.

Why do you want to know my age, religion, sexuality and all sorts of other personal things?

We will ask you about you age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and religion amongst other things so that we can check if there are any differences in views between different groups of residents and make sure there aren't any specific groups of people more affected than others.