

Healthwatch Southwark (HWS) Advisory Group Member

Role description

In line with HWS's statutory responsibilities, contract and solid information from the local public, and working with the HWS team and the Community Southwark (CS) Board:

- To build and maintain effective working relationships with the staff team and the rest of the Advisory Group (AG).
- To declare any relevant personal, professional or commercial interests in any matters being discussed by the Advisory Group.
- To contribute in a balanced, efficient way to AG meetings, supporting the Chair to ensure all members can be heard.
- To work with the other members in developing long-term strategy for HWS, including how to undertake statutory HW activities, and which topics and services to cover. (This will include providing useful contextual knowledge and insights, sharing useful information from local networks and/or experiences with health and care.)
- To work with the other members in balanced and fruitful consideration of matters (set out in law and the Terms of Reference) around HWS's influence and use of its powers, supporting the team to operate effectively and helping to form views for submission to the CS Board where appropriate.
- To help keep HWS to its mission and values, and help safeguard and uphold its reputation, independence, influence, and impact.

[This involves working in a challenging context/role as a 'critical friend' (including of the organisation that funds us); as a small budget/team with a statutory role and amongst much bigger players; and sometimes managing defence of research/engagement methods.]

- To work with the CS Board to ensure HWS is well run and effective, making a difference in line with its objectives, from an oversight rather than an operational perspective.
- To work with the AG, team and CS Board to help identify and resolve problems and risks, contributing advice from one's own experience and local knowledge.
- Representation and promotion, acting as an ambassador:
 - In common with the other Group members, where they have capacity and skills, to represent HWS at public meetings and events and use their in-depth knowledge of HWS to uphold patient voice and the organisation's work.
 - To make known HWS's achievements, promote the organisation and its work among any of one's own networks, and help identify opportunities for joint working and collaboration.

- To flexibly, reliably and in a timely way (including sometimes beyond regular meetings) provide insight, guidance and confident, balanced advice on emerging issues concerning: strategy, influence, reputation, independence, relationships with stakeholders, managing conflicts of role/interest, and managing capacity in a challenging environment.

Person Specification

AG members should be ‘lay people’ - i.e. not currently working in a registered health or social work profession. They should also not be employed in other roles by health and social care commissioning organisations for Southwark, such as national NHS bodies, South East London Clinical Commissioning Group or Southwark Council. Lay employees of health and care providers (including NHS providers, social care providers and publicly-funded voluntary organisations) may be considered with careful attention to managing conflicts of interest. Those holding political office as a Councillor or MP will not be considered.

The AG should include a mixture of:

- Local people with some experience of using (or trying to use) local health and/or care services on behalf of themselves or someone they care for,
- Local people who have good connections in and knowledge of different communities, or who are representatives of community networks and organisations, such as PPGs and TROs,
- Representatives of not-for-profit organisations with interest and expertise in working with diverse communities, promoting public voice, and improving health and social care services.

Personal qualities/characteristics

- Commitment to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.
- Flexible, proactive, responsive and reliable.
- Able to balance fair challenge with understanding of pressures.
- Commitment to improving people’s experiences of health and social care.
- Commitment to equality and making heard the voices of diverse, seldom heard and disadvantaged people.
- Appreciation of the role of patient/public involvement and engagement.

Interpersonal and communication skills

- Good interpersonal skills, including listening; ability to develop effective, sustainable working relationships.
- Ability to communicate and engage with a range of different people, e.g. diverse members of the public, and express views clearly.

Governance

- Ability to understand the role of the Advisory Group, once inducted to our specific organisation.
- Ability to understand the duties, functions and position of Healthwatch.

Strategy, decision making and problem solving

- Ability to understand complex information.
- Ability to help strategise, plan, problem-solve and identify risks.
- Ability to support informed/balanced decision-making by asking the right questions, identifying criteria, and providing advice where appropriate.

Contextual understanding

- Skills and commitment to stay up to date with local health and social care issues.

Desirable/bonus

- Experience of attending formal or advisory meetings.
- Understanding of the context and challenges of work in small voluntary organisations.
- Existing local networks among different communities and/or organisations/stakeholders.
- Experience of public representation, acting as an advocate, member of a representative group, or in a 'critical friend' role - or alternatively, of having worked in an organisation which was the subject of such representations.
- Experience of conducting consultation, engagement or research activities.