

Healthwatch Southwark (HWS) Advisory Group Chair

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 ensure that the Advisory Group (AG) as a whole acts in partnership.
- To promote good governance, working with the CS Board to ensure:
 - Compliance with the Group's Terms of Reference.
 - The AG consists of suitably skilled, experienced and diverse members who understand their roles and responsibilities with appropriate arrangements for appraisal, training and development.
 - Key issues are discussed by the AG in a timely manner with appropriate information, and the Group receives professional advice when needed.
 - Progress, views, issues and risks discussed by the AG are accurately recorded and fed back to the CS Board in an appropriate and timely way, in liaison with the CS Board liaison member.
- To chair Advisory Group meetings, ensuring:
 - Agendas are agreed for Advisory Group meetings in consultation with the Healthwatch Manager.
 - The business of the Advisory Group is conducted efficiently, in line with its role, drawing on the expertise of members, and the key goals are delivered.
 - All members are given the opportunity to express their views and that appropriate standards of behaviour are maintained in line with an agreed code of conduct.
 - To declare any relevant personal, professional or commercial interests in any matters being discussed by the Advisory Group, and manage the conflicts of interest of other members.
- To lead the Advisory Group 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 lead the AG 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:
 - To take a role as a credible figurehead (for example in media work and occasionally through attending events where possible).
 - To advocate for HWS’s representation in decision making, maintaining good relationships with key stakeholders. This may include occasional correspondence and, in exceptional circumstances, meetings with partners alongside the manager.
 - 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 oversee and contribute to the publishing of an Annual Report highlighting priorities, progress and key issues.
- 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

The chair needs to be a Southwark resident (or registered with a Southwark GP) aged over 18, with some experience of using local health and/or care services on behalf of themselves or someone they care for.

They should be a ‘lay person’ - 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.

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 well with a range of different people, e.g. diverse members of the public, commissioners.

Governance/chairing

- Ability to understand the roles of a Board, Advisory Group and Chair, once inducted to our specific organisation.
- Ability to understand the duties, functions and position of Healthwatch.
- Ability to explain these roles to others and maintain adherence to the functions of the group (e.g. a balanced not individualistic focus; strategic not operational discussions).
- Experience of attending meetings and ability to chair effectively (keeping meetings on track, ensuring all views are heard, and bringing the group to balanced decisions).

Strategy, decision making and problem solving leadership

- Ability to understand, analyse and consolidate 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

- Awareness of current health and social care issues, and the skills and commitment to stay up to date.
- Ability to inform themselves about and understand the broader context of health and social care decision making.
- Astute in helping to identify and build productive relationships with key stakeholders, e.g. local activists, NHS decisionmakers.

Desirable/bonus

- Previous involvement in community and/or voluntary activity or on a trustee board.
- Understanding of the context and challenges of work in small voluntary organisations.
- Existing local networks among different communities and/or organisations/stakeholders.
- Experience of working constructively with the press.
- 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.