

# Decision making policy and procedures for all staff, board and volunteers

## Final Version

### Policy Statement

Healthwatch Southwark makes its decisions in an open and transparent way and ensures the interests of the people of Southwark 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:

- *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.
- *Freedom of Information Act 2000*.
- *Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)*.

This policy applies to all relevant decisions made by Healthwatch Southwark.

### Relevant Decisions

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

- How we 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.
- Any decisions about projects to be undertaken.

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

## Who may make such decisions?

The Healthwatch Southwark Advisory Board (a consultative body made up of residents), will be responsible for making relevant decisions. The Board will have the power to delegate some of this decision making to the Lead Officer of Healthwatch Southwark; for example, small pieces of work which do not have a substantive impact on staff or financial resources.

All relevant decisions, including those delegated to the Lead Officer, will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting at which the decision was made. The agreed minutes of all Board meetings will be published on Healthwatch Southwark website. Other channels will also be used to communicate individual decisions, as appropriate.

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

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

Healthwatch Southwark is hosted by Community Southwark, who ultimately hold accountability for the delivery of the contract. Delegated authority for decision making is given to the Healthwatch Southwark Advisory Board.

## Involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions

Healthwatch Southwark's Advisory Board is composed solely of lay volunteers (people who are not a health or social care professionals, and are not paid employees of Healthwatch Southwark). Healthwatch Southwark intends to secure broad based views on its activities wherever possible, therefore others, and particularly lay people and volunteers, will be consulted concerning specific relevant decisions where necessary. Methods of consultation may include:

- Surveys and Questionnaires
- Feedback on the Website or social media
- Local consultation meetings (in person or online)
- Engagement with local groups with a focus on Health and Social Care.

## How are decisions made?

The potential scope of the work of Healthwatch Southwark is large - it has a responsibility for health and social care services for all adults, children and young people in Southwark, including those who are most vulnerable or may be excluded. There is therefore a need to prioritise the issues that are focused upon. The main sources to inform the work programme are likely to include:

- People's experiences of health and social care services that they share with us.
- Evidence proactively collected about specific areas of concern through the stories and enquiries we hear 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.

- Feedback from local stakeholders i.e. Local Authority, Local Care Partnership, NHS Trust.

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

In order to prioritise, Healthwatch Southwark's Advisory Board will carefully consider all sources of information and decide where it can add most value. Factors to be considered include but are not limited to:

- That the issues fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Southwark delivers to its statutory remit.
- How much the issue matters to local people, it must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people in health and social care.
- How much change Healthwatch Southwark 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 the budget, maintain independence and ensure that issues are brought to the attention of the health and care system.
- Does the change need to come from Healthwatch Southwark - so that Healthwatch isn't focusing on things that others can do more easily and effectively?
- What are the risks associated with the decision, and how will they be managed?
- What are the budget and other resource implications of the decision, if any.
- Finally, the Board of Healthwatch Southwark will consider the work as a full set of priorities, as together they need to have the greatest impact for people using health and social care services.

### **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 Southwark 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 Southwark and Southwark Council, it will be reported to the commissioner at Southwark Council and further action agreed between the council commissioner and Healthwatch Southwark.

In each eventuality, actions will be recorded in Board minutes.

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

Healthwatch Southwark 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, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Healthwatch Southwark will monitor this policy in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

### **Review of policy document**

The Board of Healthwatch Southwark will review the effectiveness of the decision-making policy and procedures set out in this document every year. Any amendments will require a simple majority of Board members voting in favour.

## Procedures

Healthwatch Southwark undertakes to carry out the following procedures, in addition to those above:

- Publish Healthwatch Southwark most up to date policy document on Healthwatch Southwark website.
- Review and obtain Board approval to Healthwatch Southwark decision making policy every year.
- Ensure all Healthwatch Southwark staff are familiar with the policy and refresh their understanding and awareness of the need for open and transparent on a regular basis, at a minimum after review by the Board.

Decision making policy and procedures	
Version	5 - final
Author	Rhyana Ebanks-Babb (Manager)
Approved by	Advisory Board of Healthwatch Southwark
Date approved	15.05.2025
Effective date	15.05.2025
Review date	15.05.2026