

Version	Title	Author	Changes (summary of changes)	Authorised	Date
4	Membership on Partnership Bodies Policy	ZH	Reviewed and updated footer	Approved	15/05/2024

HEALTHWATCH WEST SUSSEX MEMBERSHIP OF, AND ROLE ON, PARTNERSHIP BODIES AND BOARD

Requests for Healthwatch to join a Board

There have been a number of requests for Healthwatch West Sussex to ‘join’ a Board, committee or group that is responsible for the commissioning or governance of a service or organisation or is an existing or potential partnership governing body.

This is a time of great challenge and change for all health and social care services. Healthwatch West Sussex wishes to support and contribute to the very difficult work that commissioners and providers are undertaking and to ensure that the views and experience of the people of West Sussex is influential in the design and delivery of future services. However, the Board of Healthwatch West Sussex believe that the aims and objectives of local Healthwatch’s are generally not compatible with full membership of commissioning groups, governing bodies and partnership Board.

The Healthwatch Board would like to make its position clear about how it will consider requests for membership of Board and bodies and what role it think it is appropriate for Healthwatch West Sussex to take in relation to a particular organisation or partnership governing body.

All requests for involvement will be considered in relation to the two key principles of Local Healthwatch:

- Local Healthwatch ensures the views of local people are heard and taken into account.
- Local Healthwatch is independent of service commissioners and providers.

The Board believe that these principles may be compromised if Healthwatch West Sussex becomes a full member of a Board or governing body. Full membership means that Healthwatch West Sussex would have to:

- take a full role in the business of the Board or governing body, participating in votes, as appropriate.
- share responsibility for, and support the decisions of, the Board or governing body in its dealings with the public.

This would compromise Healthwatch West Sussex's ability to present an objective view of the work of the Board or governing body and the implications of any decisions made.

It may be appropriate and useful for a Healthwatch West Sussex staff member or volunteer to attend a Board or governing body as a participating observer or as a non-voting member, where Healthwatch West Sussex has additional knowledge or information or can add a different viewpoint to the debate. If this is considered appropriate, the Healthwatch West Sussex representative will make sure that their role on the Board or governing body is understood and written into the terms of reference for the group, if needed.

Requests for Healthwatch West Sussex to represent the views of patients, service users and carers on governing bodies and partnership Boards

Healthwatch West Sussex is asked to attend Board and bodies to represent the views of patients, carers and service users. Whilst Healthwatch West Sussex is happy to contribute to such bodies where it has the staff or volunteer time to do so, Healthwatch West Sussex involvement should not replace the engagement and communication activities of commissioners and providers but add value to it. Providers and commissioners of health and social care services have statutory duties to undertake engagement with the public in relation to their activities.

Healthwatch West Sussex is able to offer the following support to governing bodies and partnership Board:

- A patient, service user or carer perspective on a particular issue through its staff or network of volunteers. This may include recruiting someone or people with a particular knowledge or experience from the Healthwatch West Sussex network.
- Access to data that it has collected directly and from other organisations.

- A friendly critique of engagement and communications activity and recommendations for improvements.
- Use of its own networks and contacts to communicate the work that is being done and to facilitate engagement.
- Contribution to engagement activities that are being carried out by other organisations.
- Specialist engagement activity if gaps are identified in the engagement work of commissioners and providers.