



Memorandum of Understanding between:

**NHS England
and
Healthwatch England**

June 2015

1. Joint Statement

NHS England and Healthwatch England share a common goal of ensuring that the views and interests of patients, citizens and consumers are at the heart of everything we do. Through this memorandum of understanding, we agree to work together and to challenge each other when necessary. This will support our shared purpose of improving health and wellbeing outcomes for consumers, including patients, carers, families and communities.

The shared approach for working together will be characterised by openness, transparency, information sharing and timely engagement on issues of mutual interest and importance.

This agreement will sit alongside the other memorandums of understanding and partnership agreements that both NHS England and Healthwatch England have in place with other partners in the health and social care system.

This document is not legally binding and cannot constrain either organisation in exercising their respective roles and responsibilities as directed by the Secretary of State.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England was established in accordance with section 181 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) to provide NHS England (alongside other organisations) with the views of people who use health and social care services on their need for and experiences of health and social care services and of Local Healthwatch organisations and others on the standard of provision of health and social care services and on whether or how the standard could or should be improved. Healthwatch England have statutory powers to reflect this purpose.

The health and social care reforms of 2012 set a powerful ambition of putting people at the centre of health and social care. To help realise that ambition, the reforms created a local Healthwatch in every local authority area across England and Healthwatch England, the national body. Healthwatch England provides leadership and support to the network to help ensure that each local Healthwatch has a positive impact on local services; champion service improvements and empowers local people. The network is strongest working together to share information, expertise and learning in order to improve health and social

care services. The vision is working towards a society in which people's health and social care needs are heard, understood and met.

Achieving this will mean that: people shape health and social care delivery; people influence the services they receive personally; people hold services to account.

As the consumer champion for health and social care, Healthwatch England: listens hard to people, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them; influences those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future; empowers and informs people to get the most from their health and social care services and encouraging other organisations to do the same; and works with the Healthwatch network to champion service improvement and to empower local people.

NHS England

NHS England is an independent non departmental public body. NHS England's overarching role is to ensure that the NHS continuously improves outcomes for patients within the resources available. It fulfils this role through its leadership of the commissioning system.

Working in partnership with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and other stakeholders it secures better outcomes for patients; promotes the rights and standards guaranteed by the NHS Constitution; promoting equality, reducing health inequalities and ensuring that the health and social care system operates within the resources available.

The NHS commissioning system requires NHS England to provide national consistency in areas like quality, safety, access and value for money whilst promoting the autonomy of CCGs to make decisions that are in the best interests of their community.

NHS England directly commissions some NHS services including specialised services, primary care services, healthcare for people in the justice system and services for members of the armed forces and public health services.

3. Shared Purpose

Our shared purpose is to secure the best possible health outcomes for consumers, patients and the public, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.

We will work together to share intelligence and insight that help ensure people who use services are properly informed and to assist communities in championing improvements to their local services. In particular, we will focus on:

- The importance of the consumer voice as a signal of quality and safety;
- The need to shape services around people's needs; the need to involve people in decision-making about the services they personally receive and those that are provided to their local communities;
- The flow of intelligence and insight between both organisations that lead to improvements;
- Ensuring effective commissioning which takes into account local communities and the overall health needs of the community; and
- Working to secure appropriate responses to concerns and complaints.

4. Our approach to joint working

NHS England and Healthwatch England commit to transparent and open communication between our two organisations to support and oversee joint working.

a) Ways of Working

- Strategic - the organisations will work together to support each other in meeting our respective strategic objectives;
- Operational - the organisations will develop clear approaches to dealing coherently and effectively with a range of operational matters; and
- Cultural - the organisations will seek to promote common values, based on those in the NHS Constitution, and constructive behaviours.

b) Style and Behaviours

Where no legal constraints exist, the overarching approach to operational working will be characterised by:

- Openness and honesty;
- Transparency;

- Understanding of respective statutory roles, duties and powers, recognising the need to work collaboratively as well as individually;
- Engagement on issues of mutual interest and importance, including joint learning and development;
- Early and pro-active information sharing at a local, regional and national level.
- Trust: providing and being open to challenge; and
- Ambitious for patients and the public with a focus on ensuring the best possible outcomes.

c) Delivering Joint Priorities

Practical working arrangements

To maintain an effective working relationship, NHS England and Healthwatch England will ensure there is regular contact and close working. Together, we will work to ensure the local Healthwatch network is engaged with NHS England local offices and work to identify areas of challenge and best practice in local working arrangements. Together we will determine how best to provide support and information to the network about major changes in policy and practice.

NHS England is working on how the rights set out in the NHS Constitution can be turned into tangible behaviours and actions. This is linked to work that Healthwatch England is conducting regarding consumer rights in health and social care.

Statutory consultations

Healthwatch England is a statutory consultee of the Department of Health on changes to the NHS Mandate which sets the frame for NHS England's priority areas of work.

Healthwatch England has a power to provide NHS England with information and advice on:

- a) The views of people who use health or social care services and of other members of the public on their needs for and experiences of health and social care services, and
- b) The views of Local Healthwatch organisations and of other persons on the standard of provision of health and social care services and on whether or how the standard could or should be improved.

When Healthwatch England provides NHS England with advice and information, NHS England must inform the Healthwatch England Committee in writing of a response or a proposed response to the advice.

Further, NHS England must consult the Healthwatch England committee before it publishes guidance for clinical commissioning groups on the discharge of their commissioning functions (or revised guidance that NHS England considers significant).

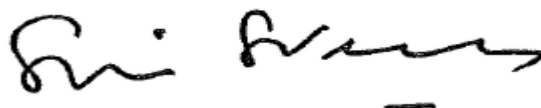
5. Reviewing this agreement

This memorandum of understanding will be reviewed annually and may be revised sooner if both organisations agree that this is necessary.



Dr Katherine Rake
Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

Date: 04/03/2015



Simon Stevens
Chief Executive, NHS England

Date: 26/06/2015