

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

15 JULY 2022

QUESTION No. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No 36

Francis Brown to ask the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board:

Healthwatch Reading

Healthwatch is now under new management.

What changes can residents and patient groups in Reading expect to see in the coming year?

How will Healthwatch demonstrate a greater effectiveness in discharging its statutory duties relating to the numerous facets of health care and social care in the Reading area?

REPLY by the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board (Councillor McEwan):

The contract with The Advocacy People to deliver Healthwatch has been in place for 6 weeks and this time has been focussed on securing staff in place within a new structure and ensuring all transferred systems, such as the website, are functioning properly. The team are undertaking induction and training in The Advocacy People's systems, policies and procedures so they can continue to handle day to day queries and attend meetings where appropriate. The Advocacy People have welcomed onboard some of the previous Healthwatch Reading Advisory Board members and discussions on recruiting new Board members and Chair, plus other volunteers, are underway.

In terms of what people can expect over the coming year, a first draft workplan has been created using evidence collated over the last year from a range of sources as required by Healthwatch England such as:

- Engagement work within the community, including volunteer activity.
- Information from your Local Authority Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Healthwatch led public meetings such as Annual Conferences.
- Surveys and questionnaires.
- Service user experience including that of staff and volunteers.
- Publicly available national and local data.
- Focus groups.
- Information from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS); including faith groups, community groups, charities, resident groups, patient groups etc.
- Views and experiences of local people.
- Providers of health and social care services.
- Commissioners of health and social care services.

Healthwatch are working to finalise this shortly and this will be presented at a future Health and Wellbeing Board.

In terms of greater effectiveness as part of The Advocacy People, the Healthwatch Reading team has access to the central support team of ICT, Finance, Business Development and HR. As part of a wider family of five Healthwatch's, Reading will benefit from the economies of scale this creates (for example, a centralised marketing function, sharing surveys on common topics), share expertise/good practice operationally and strategically and utilise standard

policies/procedures. This is particularly important in the Berkshire West area where The Advocacy People are the host provider for West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough as well as Reading. This means that, where appropriate and without compromising local input, a single team member will be able to represent the 3 areas creating obvious efficiencies.

The Advocacy People is a large organisation delivering advocacy and Healthwatch contracts across the south of England, including Reading and Berkshire, for many years and bring a wealth of experience to the Reading team. A good working relationship is being formed to deliver Healthwatch Reading going forward.