

Chair's report

Purpose

1. To update the Board on recent meetings I have attended on behalf of Healthwatch (see Appendix 1). In addition I have held numerous meetings with our managers and NEDs in person, via zoom/teams and by telephone.

Key Issues

2. I previously reported on the appointment of Jess Slater as our CEO. For the last four months we have worked closely together as she has taken up the reins at Healthwatch C&P. I am delighted at how quickly she is building relationships across the Health and Care system whilst getting to grips with internal issues. Step by step she is putting in place a plan to ensure our Healthwatch is robust in all areas and can make an even greater impact for those we serve.

3. At present Healthwatch England are continuing to review the sustainability of the Network at a time when our voice will be even more important as a new government takes charge. We have a view that the Healthwatch network will need to look at ways we can become even more efficient and effective as a new government seeks to drive improvements for patients and carers.

4. The arrival of a new government always creates excitement. The new Labour government has made it clear that the NHS needs to change - I agree. I have consistently said to all who might listen that if we keep doing the same things we will get the same results. On too many occasions both primary and acute care are not meeting patients quite reasonable expectations. Lord Darzi's report covers all the shortfalls we have been describing for years. For us there were no surprises - our reports had been clear about what was wrong and what needed to be addressed.

The Prime Minister is right when he says it will take time before the NHS can be improved to the levels of customer satisfaction of a decade ago. So let the work begin now and let patients be part of the solution. If the services the NHS provides are to improve there has to be a seismic shift of resources to prevention and care in settings outside of hospitals. Still today in our local hospitals nearly 1 in 5 patients do not need to be there.

If we are going to get the NHS to where patients and carers want and need it to be then as much attention needs to be given to Social Care as to General Practice and hospitals.

5. One of the greatest challenges facing our Integrated Care System is how to improve its record on Health Inequalities. These exist in many parts of the system and affect many of the most disadvantaged users and have only got worse over recent years. That is why our Healthwatch Summit on 2nd October is dedicated to identifying where inequalities exist and looking at ways to tackle them. The event at Kingsgate, Peterborough is already sold out and will be attended by commissioners, providers, and users of services, some of whom have found difficulties in accessing the care they need.

We will be providing a report on the days discussions and its conclusions.

Action required by the Board

The Board is asked to note the contents of this report

Author: Stewart Francis

25th September 2024

Appendix 1

Meetings attended by the Chair – 11th July to 25th September 2024

| Meeting | Date |
|--|-----------------------|
| HW Summit prep meeting | 15 th July |
| HW Board Development meeting | 17 th July |
| Health and Wellbeing/ICP Board development session | 19 th July |
| Health and Wellbeing/ICP Board meeting | 19 th July |
| HW Summit prep meeting | 30 th July |
| Meeting NED | 3 rd Sept |
| GPG prep meeting | 3 rd Sept |
| GPG meeting | 11 th Sept |
| 1 to 1 meeting with Chair ICB | 12 th Sept |
| PPG meeting | 18 th Sept |
| NWAFT AGM | 25 th Sept |