

23 November 2011

Dear Colleague,

ESSEX HEALTHWATCH PATHFINDER

At the beginning of October I sent out a letter to our partners in Essex, outlining plans for setting up a new Local Healthwatch Pathfinder Executive (PE).

We have received a number of responses to this letter, with the vast majority being very supportive of the plans. However, we were also sent a number of interesting comments and questions about this process.

I am writing this letter to answer various queries and issues that were raised by the original letter, in an effort to clarify the position and ongoing work in setting up the Pathfinder Executive.

Pathfinder Executive Membership

- In response to concerns that the number of people appointed to the Executive may not be sufficient to represent the geographical and demographic diversity of Essex, I have decided that the number of members should be increased from twelve people up to a maximum of 24.
- While Essex County Council is helping to set up the Pathfinder, and the subsequent full Local Healthwatch Organisation, Essex County Council officers are not directly involved in the selection process and will not be appointing members. This will be done by a panel of cross-party county councillors and service user representatives, who have been selected for their knowledge of the local health and social care arena.
- The appointment panel will be nominated by me as the elected Cabinet Member for Adults, Health, and Community Wellbeing at ECC. There will be three councillors and three service user representatives on the panel.
- The panel will be asked to ensure that the Pathfinder Executive members it appoints represent the social and geographical diversity of Essex as well as a range of experiences of health and social care.
- People whose work would create a chronic conflict of interest for them as members of Healthwatch, eg, commissioners of health and social care services and people who work for provider organisations, will not be eligible for

appointment to the Executive. County councillors and executive district councillors will also be ineligible for membership on similar grounds.

- Appropriate induction and training will be provided for all members of the Pathfinder Executive.
- Travel and subsistence costs incurred by Executive members in the course of Healthwatch Pathfinder activities or training will be reimbursed, although no other payments will be made to members.

Independence and accountability of the Executive

- The Pathfinder will be an independent body. The calibre and reputation of its members will be the best guarantee of its independence. Although the County Council will formally appoint the Executive's members, it will not remove any of those members except in cases of gross failure or serious misconduct.
- The Health & Social Care Bill creates a duty under which the Council must ensure that Healthwatch arrangements are effective and provide value for money. In keeping with this principle, the County Council will monitor the Pathfinder's performance against outcomes and codes of conduct agreed in a Service Level Agreement. This is to make sure that activities are carried out in an ethical way and deliver good outcomes for the people of Essex.
- Meetings of the Pathfinder will be open to the public, excepting those where confidentiality or ethical issues would make this inappropriate. Agendas will be published in advance.
- The Pathfinder will report on its activities to members of the public, using various methods.

Functions of the Executive

- The Pathfinder Executive is tasked with setting up Essex Healthwatch in such a way that it will have a demonstrable impact on improving health and social care outcomes for the people of Essex.
- To that end, the primary functions of the Pathfinder Executive are to design the overall shape and internal structure of the Essex Healthwatch, to develop strong networks in local communities and among voluntary groups, to develop effective working relationships with commissioners (including GPs) and service providers, and to develop sound working practices.
- Engaging with "Hard to Reach" or "Easily Marginalised" groups will be a priority.
- While Healthwatch is expected to focus primarily on health and social care relating to adults, it may also investigate issues relating to the health care of children; and this will be in scope for the Pathfinder Executive.

- The Executive will encourage the establishment and meeting of local groups of Healthwatch associate members and members of the public, and will actively engage and participate in this.

Relationship with existing LINK groups and transition to Healthwatch

- The Pathfinder Executive will have to work alongside other existing groups in the Essex & Southend LINK. It will have access to the same legal powers. When taking any decisions that will have a significant and direct impact on existing LINK groups, the Executive should liaise with them.
- To help co-ordination with existing LINK groups, the Chair of the LINK should ex officio be a member of the Pathfinder Executive. However, the Pathfinder Executive will wish to elect its own chair at its inaugural meeting.
- During the transition phase in 2012, existing LINK groups will be encouraged to integrate their activities and projects with the Executive's, in readiness for the start of Healthwatch in October 2012.
- Associate membership of Healthwatch will be open to anyone. There will be an important role for associate members, working on project teams and in localities. They may also be co-opted onto Healthwatch committees.
- The Pathfinder Executive will be asked to develop fulfilling roles for associate members. Training will be available for associate.

We will shortly issue the recruitment pack for people who wish to apply to join the Pathfinder Executive. If you have already expressed an interest in applying, the pack will be sent to you automatically.

If you have any further questions about the Pathfinder, or about anything in this letter that you would like to discuss in more detail, please contact Duncan Wood on Duncan.wood@essex.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



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