



**Voluntary Sector  
Forum:  
December 2017**



# Healthwatch Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Forum

7<sup>th</sup> December 2017

## i. Introduction

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is the watchdog on health and social care services in Oxfordshire. It held its third forum for the voluntary sector in 2017 in Cowley, Oxford on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017. In all 25 organisations and groups were represented by 31 attendees.<sup>1</sup>

Healthwatch Oxfordshire values the expertise and knowledge of voluntary sector groups and organisations and wants to find ways to engage with the sector. This will enable Healthwatch Oxfordshire to amplify the voices of the people that the groups support to commissioners and providers of health and care services. It will also enable Healthwatch Oxfordshire to build a picture of what is working well and what could be better in health and care services in Oxfordshire.

The focus of the meeting was therefore to offer proposals on how Healthwatch Oxfordshire can engage with the sector and to understand what voluntary sector groups think of this engagement strategy.

## ii. How can Healthwatch Oxfordshire engage with the voluntary sector?

Healthwatch has a number of proposals on how it would like to engage with voluntary sector groups. These include:

### **Voluntary Sector Hub webpage**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire wants to include a dedicated webpage - The Voluntary Sector Hub- on its website which can provides groups with

- A calendar of meetings and events that Healthwatch Oxfordshire attends and organises. Groups will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on issues pertinent to the listed events and meetings via the website.
- Sector reports from the Project Fund. There will be information on Healthwatch Oxfordshire's Project Fund and the reports that come out of our collaborative working with voluntary sector partners.

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<sup>1</sup> You can find a list of all attending organisations in the Appendix.

- A feedback form that is enables groups to send feedback quickly to Healthwatch Oxfordshire.
- A 'visit my group' form that enables groups to request a visit from Healthwatch Oxfordshire.

### **What did attendees say to this proposal?**

People responded positively to the idea of a Voluntary Sector Hub and said they would like this to go ahead.

Feedback included:

“Really useful to have a snapshot of what’s happening- will pull together a lot of info provide all organisations contribute regularly!”

“Webpage- calendar- good idea; comments/contact text box- click in to give quick feedback; webinars.”

### **The Project Fund**

The Project Fund will enable groups to apply for a small grant from Healthwatch Oxfordshire to gather data from their members around a particular theme (to be agreed in advance with Healthwatch Oxfordshire). Healthwatch Oxfordshire will then use the data to write a report on that group’s experiences of health and care services.

What did attendees say to this proposal?

Many groups reacted very favourably to this idea and have requested further details of the Fund. We will be sharing full details of the Project Fund in January 2018 and look forward to working with a number of groups through the Fund.

### **Quarterly Voluntary Sector Forums**

Quarterly voluntary sector Forums will enable groups to network with each other, raise their profile and give feedback to Healthwatch Oxfordshire on a particular theme.

What did attendees say to this proposal?

Groups said they welcome the opportunity to attend quarterly Forum meetings. Feedback included:

“We would welcome this as a means of drawing voluntary organisations together regularly to discuss topic currently being addressed. A really useful meeting for information purposes!”

“So many interesting people, representing so many organisations, attended the meeting...!! There is still very much a need for meetings such as this one and for you and Healthwatch to bring community groups together.”

### **The Briefing e-newsletter**

Groups are also encouraged to sign up to our fortnightly news email called ‘Briefing’.

What did attendees say to this proposal?

We had a few comments from groups asking if we could feature organisations in the email newsletter. “Could local charities have a piece in the newsletter from time to time- raising awareness of current projects?” We will aim to provide groups the opportunity to feature their events in the Briefing and on our calendar from 2018.

#### **iii. What else did groups tell us at the meeting?**

#### **Groups want to raise awareness of their services**

Some attendees raised the point that they face barriers in reaching people who may need their support. Representatives of different groups expressed frustration because they are not able to identify people who are in need of their services. Groups said they could help tackle social isolation and loneliness- which have been identified as serious impediments to people’s wellbeing- but sometimes struggle to make people aware of their services.

Groups said they wanted to be able to work with health professionals and statutory bodies to get the word out about their services but are often told that data protection laws prevent sharing of data about people who may be in need of services.

Some groups said they want to reach people through their GPs but struggle to have their notices/posters displayed in GP surgeries.

**How can these barriers be overcome?**

#### **The role of Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)**

One suggestion from attendees was to strengthen the connection between voluntary groups and Patient Participation Groups (PPGs). All GP surgeries are meant to have PPGs though attendees pointed out that some surgeries only have ‘virtual’ PPGs. Attendees said PPGs

could help people to become aware of the local support available to them by organising events showcasing local groups. The Chipping Norton Health Centre's Patient Participation group provided an example of the 'Better Health Day' they had organised in October 2017 to this end.

Another suggestion was that each PPG could use its notice board in their GP surgery to highlight local groups and their services.

### **The need for an up to date directory of local services**

Attendees raised the point that they want their group to feature in a listing of local support services. The main concerns around this were how to create a list like this, where it should be housed so people can access it and how to keep this up to date.

From the discussion, it also became clear that there were already examples of efforts to create such listings including the Community Information Network (Age UK Oxfordshire's support service that can be accessed on the internet, over the phone and through drop-in sessions), Oxfordshire County Council's livewell webpages, and the OxFed (Oxford Federation for General Practice and Primary Care) care navigators<sup>2</sup> for those in Oxford city. Healthy Abingdon also has a website that lists local groups and services in Abingdon.

### **The role of social prescribing**

Attendees said that the services their groups offer can help reduce demand on stretched health and care services as they can support people's wellbeing and physical and mental health through their activities. They were vocal in calling on health and care professionals, commissioners and providers to signpost people to the range of services offered by local, self-help, community and voluntary groups and charities. This mirrored the discussion that attendees had at Healthwatch Oxfordshire's last voluntary sector forum on Abingdon in July 2017 where they emphasised the role local groups can play in social prescribing.

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<sup>2</sup> You can read the OxFed leaflet on care navigators here <https://oxfed.uk/sites/www.oxfed.uk/files/2017-10/Patient%20Leaflet%20PCN%20Service-280917.pdf>

**iv. What can Healthwatch Oxfordshire can do to address these issues?**

- Healthwatch Oxfordshire quarterly voluntary sector forum meetings, where voluntary sector groups and patient participation groups are invited, are a good way for groups to raise awareness of their services and network with each other. We will hold four Forums around the county in 2018 to enable groups from across Oxfordshire to attend.
- Our Voluntary Sector Hub webpage will offer opportunities for a more connected voluntary sector and better engagement with Healthwatch Oxfordshire.
- Our next voluntary sector forum will be held in March 2018 in Banbury and will focus on social prescribing. We hope this meeting will offer the voluntary sector the stimulus and opportunity to engage with commissioners and statutory representatives on social prescribing.
- Healthwatch Oxfordshire will send this report to the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's locality forum meetings, with the request to share it with their PPGs. There are six locality forums in Oxfordshire and the locality forum meetings are attended by representatives of local PPGs. We trust this will highlight the issues raised at our meeting by voluntary sector groups seeking closer working with their PPGs.

## **Appendix: List of attending organisations**

Abingdon Stroke Club

Age UK Oxfordshire

Al Anon family groups

Alzheimer's Society

Be Free YC (young carers support)

Chipping Norton Health Centre Patient Participation Group

Elmore Community Services

Healthy Abingdon

Homeless Oxfordshire

MacMillan Cancer Support

MS Society- West Oxfordshire Group

My Life My Choice

Newbury Street Patient Participation Group

Oxford City Council

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Oxford 50+ Network

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Oxfordshire ME Group for Action (OMEGA)

Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Refugee Resource

Rethink Mental Illness

They Key Medical Practice Patient Participation Group

Unlimited Oxfordshire

Woodstock Stroke Club