

Minutes of the Healthwatch Northumberland Board meeting held on 15 December 2020 via Zoom

Present: David Thompson (DT) Chair, Margaret Young (MY) Independent Member, Sue Taylor (ST) Independent Member, Mike Allport (MA) Independent Member, Catherine Lee (CL) Patient Advice and Liaison Service, Kevin Higgins (KH) Northumberland County Council, Liz Prudhoe (LP) Adapt NE. Hayley Brown, Independent Member, Debra Blakey, Carers Northumberland

In attendance: Derry Nugent (DN) Project Coordinator, Emma Grimwood (EG) Volunteering Officer, Helen Brown (HB) Engagement Officer,

Apologies: Liz Ions (LI) Northumberland Voluntary Sector Assembly

Minutes recorded by Derry Nugent

1.Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest:	Action
<p>The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting. He welcomed Fareeha Usman and Helen Brown to their first meeting.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no members declared interests pertinent to items at this meeting.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of last meeting</p> <p>The minutes of 15 September 2020 were agreed as a true record.</p>	
<p>3. Action points</p> <p>All items were agreed as completed except for:</p> <p>Item 7 - DN will provide KH with further information about the Recovery College as it becomes available.</p> <p>Item 10 – DT and DN to work on updating the handbook/Board induction pack (carried forward from September 2020)</p> <p>Item 15 – DN and HB will include supermarkets as part of the Engagement Plan.</p>	
<p>4. Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
<p>5. Questions from the public</p> <p>Before the meeting members of the public were asked to submit questions, which addressed the agenda. One question had been sent (name omitted)</p> <p><i>“My wife suffers from Dry Macular Degeneration and is gradually losing her sight, my comment is that there appears to be very little links between the</i></p>	

<p><i>optometrist and the health service practitioners locally, i.e. our doctor, which I think needs to be addressed.</i></p> <p><i>Due to our own efforts, in conjunction with Sunderland Eye Hospital, my wife has undergone experimental surgery, she knows it will not help her, but it may help others, as the disease in her case appears to be hereditary as her mother suffered in the same way. We got very little help from our local optician, there just appears to be a gap here. Is it worthy of discussion?"</i></p> <p>DN said she had contacted the Local Optical Committee to find out what the correct procedure is. The Board discussed the issues raised including the help and support available to people when they are registered as blind and if this is a problem specific to the services involved or systemic. ST said she would be happy to be involved. DN was asked to reply to the questioner and to report to the next meeting.</p>	<p>DN to reply and report to next meeting</p>
<p>6. Volunteering Update and Presentation</p> <p>EG gave a presentation reflecting on the challenges and learning for the volunteer function during the pandemic. She highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers had continued to work with HWN in different roles than originally intended showing their flexibility and commitment. • The range of projects volunteers had been involved in include the 'Not Online That's Fine' engagement project, researching access to GP online services, wellbeing calls with Northumberland County Blind Association, article for the newsletter, the Quality Framework meetings • The student volunteers had developed and run an online engagement session and an Instagram takeover. • The next priorities are to review and refresh the programme and materials to support a recruitment drive. <p>Members thanked Emma for the presentation and were particularly pleased with the work by the student volunteers on mental health issues.</p>	
<p>7. Operations and Financial Update</p> <p>DN spoke to the circulated report. The following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter & View. Whilst recognising that Enter & View is wider than care homes, the Board is concerned the continuing prohibition on visits will mean that residents and carers lose the opportunity express their experiences during COVID. CL said it was important to find out how care homes had been proactive in supporting the wider benefits of visiting. It was agreed that HWN should build on the work with carers starting with the forthcoming online forum. <p>The Board will review the Enter & View performance indicator in March. If time permits there may be a discussion at the January Planning Day</p>	<p>DN and HB to include working with carers into the Engagement Plan and to work towards the reintroduction of Enter & view when appropriate. Further report in March 2020.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Voice Fund. The Board welcomed the progress on the grants and agreed to release the final grant instalment to Headway Arts and to receive a further report from Northumberland County Blind Association and the Youth Service in March • Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The Board welcomed the opportunity to be involved with the Healthwatch England Action Learning set. It was suggested that asking the public what their priorities are would be an inclusive approach and also think about it in the context of those communities which had been disproportionately affected by COVID. FU said she would be happy to help develop this work. • Strategic Influence. DT said he has made progress on meetings with senior representatives of Trusts and will continue with the remaining one and also with Adult Social Care <p>DN reported that HWN is now part of the Community Mental Health Transformation Forum which acts as a subgroup of the Transformation Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget. The Board noted expenditure has been lower on variable costs associated with travel and marketing consumables. Expenditure on the Annual Meeting and Healthwatch England Conference were also much lower. <p>The Board asked DN to prepare recommendations to use the Project Commissioning budget. Members identified initial suggestions of social care and the optical pathway.</p>	<p>DN to provide a final update on Your Voice Fund grants in March.</p> <p>DN and FU to discuss methods for developing equality, diversity, and inclusion work.</p> <p>DT to contact North East Ambulance Service and Adult Social Care</p> <p>DN to prepare recommendations to use the Project Commissioning budget</p>
<p>8. Quality Framework and Board Planning Day</p> <p>Members agreed the summary information from the Quality Framework meetings provides a firm analysis and basis for producing an Action Plan. This will be the main topic of the Board Planning Day.</p> <p>As the event will be on Zoom and therefore shorter members asked for a timed agenda with breaks and using breakout rooms to facilitate discussion. DN and EG will check on all members ability to use Zoom.</p>	<p>DN and EG will check on all members ability to use Zoom.</p>
<p>9. Board partner organisations update</p> <p>PALS CL said the service is now fully staffed and cases are back to normal levels. Main issues being raised are delays in treatments and appointments, visiting, the new ways of working and the impact on carers.</p> <p>Northumberland Carers DB reported the organisations current activity:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The carers’ survey has received 250 responses so far. It has identified issues of the strain the pandemic and lockdown is having on carer’s mental health, the lack of respite and the overall incresign in the amount of care being given. The draft report is due in January. • The mapping of Carers Northumberland Services against the NICE guidelines has identified areas to include in the operational plan – carers assessments, respite and access to education and work. • The young carers project has registered 76 young people. • A small amount of funding has enabled Carers Northumberland to provide an advanced planning project to help people get Enduring Powers of Attorney in place. This runs to March. <p>MY asked about training for carers to support them in their role. DB said details of what is currently available is on the Carers Northumberland website.</p>	
<p>10. Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>It was agreed to retain reduced operational capacity as a Strategic Risk.</p> <p>Members discussed the budget situation. KH reported the council has taken the option to extend the Healthwatch Northumberland by up to 12 months with a possible review within this period. It was agreed to add a strategic risk to this effect and to seek appropriate meetings as required.</p>	<p>DN to add contract and budget to the Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>LP and DN to seek appropriate meetings as required</p>
<p>11. Dates of meetings for 2020/21</p> <p>The next Board meeting is 23 March, format to be decided</p>	
<p>12. Any other business</p> <p>MY commented that access to GP services continues to be an issue raised in her community. She suggested that a ‘secret shopper’ approach had been useful in gathering experience in the past and this might be an alternative to Enter & View activity.</p> <p>KH highlighted the COVID Impact Enquiry being done by the Health Foundation. The evidence gathering stage ends on 18 December with a report in summer 2021.</p> <p>There was no further business.</p> <p>DT thanked everyone for their support in 2020 and wished everyone a peaceful and safe Christmas and New Year.</p>	

Date of next meeting

26 January 2021 (Planning Day)

23 March 2021

Venue/format to be confirmed.