

Board meeting – 21 July 2025

Summary minutes

Date: The Healthwatch Dorset local Board met on Monday 21 July at 10am, online

Board members present: Viv Aird (Chair) and Margaret Guy (Vice Chair), Judy Crabb and Amanda Shirlin-Brown.

In attendance: Helen Webb (Evolving Communities), Louise Bate and Adele Snell (Healthwatch Dorset)

Apologies: Sue Warr and Jack Welch.

1. Declaration of interests: There were no declarations of interest

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting: These were agreed

3. Discussion: In light of the recent announcement about the closure of Healthwatch, the Board had an open discussion sharing what they knew about:

- (i) the NHS 10-year plan and the Dash review,
- (ii) the possible implications for local health care and care services,
- (iii) the future implications for Healthwatch England and Healthwatch Dorset
- (iv) and where do we go from here?

The biggest concern raised by the board was the loss of the independent voice of patients. With so much change and turmoil in the NHS System at the moment, this raises significant concern. Where will the safe space be for the vulnerable to speak up? We need to continue to advocate for the patient voice in discussions about the new process. Healthwatch has a key role in questioning why these changes are taking place and in helping with the structure of what is to come.

The following action was agreed:

- (i) to sign up to and support the open letter from local Healthwatch organisations inviting ministers to meet to discuss what happens next.

- (ii) to consider the press releases drafted for local Healthwatch to use.
- (iii) to lobby our local MPs and reach out to local councillors to raise the profile of this decision and raise awareness.
- (iv) Health and Wellbeing Boards will have more powers in the future, and we have a seat on their board.
- (v) Healthwatch Dorset has a voice at Scrutiny Committees that we must make sure we have attendance at.
- (vi) To continue with business as usual for Healthwatch Dorset and continue to make noise about the decision that has been made.

4. Matters arising:

a) Strategic Plan: This will be put on hold pending future developments but we will run with the Mission, Vision and Values that have been developed..

b) Board Member Recruitment: Still to continue as business as usual. Offer a 1-year position on the board with a targeted list of requirements to fill. Louise to draft and circulate amongst Board members before publicizing. There are currently a couple of volunteers who may be interested in the role, and Viv and Margaret are very happy to have an informal chat about the role with anyone interested.

5. Progress Report:

a) Annual Report: This has now been published and has received some good press coverage. Copies have been sent to our local MPs and press contacts.

b) Hospital at Home: This report has been drafted, and feedback has been received from our volunteers and key hospital staff involved with the project. The outcomes provide good learning for the hospital team about communication and support to carers. Publication expected at the end of August.

c) Community Hospitals: Primarily looking at the pathway from Acute to Community Hospitals, this project has focused on a few in-depth interviews with patients happy to share their experience. Three interviews have taken place in Swanage and two in Shaftesbury. Bridport is on hold as they have a Covid

outbreak. This will be written up as a report when the interviews have all taken place.

d) Bournemouth School for Girls Project: This Project is primarily led by our youth volunteers, looking at the healthcare experiences of first-generation immigrants. Lindsey provided training to the students on how to conduct surveys, safeguarding, and how to analyse the data gathered. The group received 88 responses, and at least 5 of the students wish to pursue a future career in healthcare. There are plans in place for the group to present their findings directly to the local Primary Care Network. Throughout this project, Lindsey has developed a great relationship with the school and plans to work with them again next year with another group of youth volunteers.

e) Homelessness Project: Attended a meeting with NHS Dorset about the Homelessness Report and a meeting with BCP this week re their homelessness Strategy.

6. Future Focus:

a) Weymouth College Youth Project: Plans still in place to work with youth volunteers in September.

b) Urgent and Emergency Care Pathway: Discussions ongoing with Dorset County Hospital about engaging with young women in A&E to find out why they have left it so late to seek medical assistance and where they get their medical information from.

c) Smoke Cessation Focus Group: We have been asked to bid for a Public Health project looking at providing several focus groups targeting men, manual workers and smoke cessation. Currently in discussion with Public Health about how and where these focus groups may take place. Plans to carry out the groups in September/October, with final feedback to Public Health by the end of November.

d) Adult Social Care: The CQC has announced it will be conducting assessments at BCP and Dorset Adult Social Care in the next few months, and we will be

providing them with any feedback on Adult Social Care that they require in advance of those assessments.

e) Information, Communication and Digital Divides: The snapshot survey that Margaret conducted in Swanage at one particular location at a specific time, provided 159 responses – this is purely quantitative data. Next steps are to replicate this survey with the help of Patient Participation Groups in Christchurch, North Dorset, and maybe Weymouth and Portland. This data will be put with the information gathered from Lucy's engagement groups (e.g. refugees and learning difficulties). The final report will include data and discussion information. The Digitally excluded information will come from the work that Lucy is doing and this project, along with others, will be outlined on our website about our future projects.

f) Integrated Neighbourhood Teams: Following the success of the community engagement gathered in Boscombe regarding communication and engagement, Lucy has attended a meeting with the Purbeck Team to discuss the work she did. Lindsey has offered to provide training in listening skills for the volunteers that will be involved with this work (approx. 12-16 people in September).

Viv Aird, Chair of the Board, thanked everyone for their time today and the group agreed the date for the next board meeting, Monday 15 September 2025 in Dorchester.

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