



Factsheet 1:

# Frequently Asked Questions





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## What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is the new independent “consumer champion” for health and social care. It has been set up to help people all over the country who use services to have a powerful influence in how services are run, as well as to help people to make informed choices about the health and social care options open to them.

## How does Healthwatch operate?

Healthwatch operates on two levels:

- **Healthwatch England** works at the national level and is helping set up local Healthwatch organisations. It will take local experiences of care and use them to influence national policy; and
- **Local Healthwatch**, which began this month and operates in the same areas as each local council. It will take the experiences of local people and use them to influence local services.

## What are its legal responsibilities?

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Healthwatch has the following statutory obligations:

- Promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny and health and social care services
- Obtain the views of people about their needs for, and experiences of, health and social care services and make these

views known to those responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising those services

- Enable people to monitor and review the commissioning and provision of care services
- Make reports and recommendations about how health and social care services could be improved, to people responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising those services.

Healthwatch must also provide:

- Information and signposting support
- Independent Complaints Advocacy.



## Who is Healthwatch for?

### Local Residents

Healthwatch is for all people, whether you use children's or adults' health and/or social services now or not, if you care for someone who does or simply want to find out how to access services. It is also for people who have concerns about their local services, or wish to share a positive experience they have had.

### Community and Voluntary Sector

Healthwatch is also for local community and voluntary organisations, to have their say about the issues facing the people they work with and represent. It is important that Healthwatch works with such groups to

support local action and to see how we can strengthen the impact that can be made by working together.

## Statutory Sector

We also welcome working together with statutory health and social care bodies, such as Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group, Pennine Acute NHS Hospitals Trust, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, North West Ambulance Service and Adults and Children's Social Care services at Oldham Council, to help further the work of Healthwatch Oldham.

## What is my local Healthwatch set up to do?

### Influencing

Our job as your local Healthwatch Oldham is to make contact with residents in various ways to find out what issues are important to people across the borough. We will then consult people about their experience of health and social care services, in relation to these issues, in order to communicate the findings to those who have decision-making power about how services are run.

We will work with these “commissioners” and with the “providers” of local services to try to influence them to take on the recommendations made by Healthwatch. This is part of our **influencing** function.

It is intended that Healthwatch builds upon the work of the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) (see <http://www.oldhamlink.org.uk/work-plan.asp> for examples).

Healthwatch Oldham has evolved from Oldham LINK and as such, we will not lose the legacy of relationships, forms of influence and engagement practices developed during the past five years.

## **Information & Signposting**

We will also provide an important **information and signposting** function. Our job here is to support members of the public to make informed choices about using health and social care services. We will provide you with as much information as we can to help you to navigate your way around services, to understand what options are available and also to signpost you to other organisations and services where this may help you with your enquiry. **You can access this service by contacting us on 0161 622 5700, or by emailing [info@healthwatcholdham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatcholdham.co.uk)**

## **Independent Complaints Advocacy**

Healthwatch also provides and **Independent Complaints Advocacy** to support people making complaints to NHS bodies. This service is not run by Healthwatch Oldham but you can access it by speaking to us on 0161 622 5700.



## Who runs Healthwatch Oldham?

Healthwatch Oldham is independently governed by an appointed governance board (see below), made up of ‘lay people’.

Oldham Council has contracted The Gaddum Centre to support the establishment of Healthwatch Oldham and its governance arrangements; and to provide the influencing and signposting functions. The Gaddum Centre is a health and social care charity operating in Greater Manchester. It was also the host organisation for Oldham LINK.

## How is Healthwatch Oldham funded?

Healthwatch is government funded by The Department of Health.

## Who works at Healthwatch Oldham?

The staff team comprises:

- Manager - Ursula Hussain
- Outreach and Engagement Worker - Jade Czuba
- Information and Signposting Officer - Clair Duffy
- Project Support Worker - Martyn Nolan

## What is Healthwatch Oldham’s relationship with Healthwatch England?

We will regularly communicate information on Healthwatch Oldham’s work and feedback from local people about health and social care services to Healthwatch England. They will use this information, along with the same type of information from other local Healthwatches

across the country to be able to understand what issues are national concerns so that it can address them at this level. This will give Healthwatch a national voice and influence.

Healthwatch Oldham will also be able to get leadership and support from Healthwatch England, to ensure that it develops in line with best practice and so that local Healthwatches can learn from each others' experience.

## What has Healthwatch Oldham done so far?

We have held an initial consultation event to find out what people wanted from Healthwatch Oldham. This gave us a starting point from which to begin the planning and development of the service and to prioritise key engagement approaches of an **open forum**, holding

**themed events** and direct **contact with our Outreach and Engagement Worker.**

From our engagement work so far and from the LINK's legacy, we have been able to develop a number of workstreams.



## How can I get involved?

There are different levels that you can be involved in Healthwatch Oldham:

- The formal **Governance Board** has a role to: set the workplan by prioritising issues for action; undertake strategic partnership working through participation within local committees and other decision-making structures; engage with Healthwatch England; ensure that Healthwatch Oldham operates within best practice frameworks. A member of the Board also has a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board, which is the new strategic body to take action against health inequalities.
- You can become a **Healthwatch Champion** if you are interested in promoting the work of Healthwatch Oldham amongst your networks and contacts; gathering views and opinions from people and feeding them back to us; representing Healthwatch Oldham at local meetings and forums; and supporting the team to engage with the public and to promote and publicise the service.
- As a **Participant**, you can take part in public events and meetings on issues that are of interest to you, either to give your views or simply to receive information; and be added to our database to receive regular updates and newsletters.

The **Healthwatch Forum** will be convened quarterly. This is an open forum, where we will try to provide information about current

issues relating to health and social care that are of interest to local people. The forum will also be a place for you to have your say and to provide us with feedback about local services. All are welcome and you can attend as and when you like.

There are also specific opportunities to be involved in the **Healthwatch Oldham Workstreams** on particular issues (see Factsheet 2 “Getting Involved”).



## Contact Details

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