

Healthwatch East Sussex: Prioritisation Process and Decision-making Policy

Policy Schedule

Version	Date of next review by ESCV Board	Date of adoption by ESCV Board
1	n/a	March 2024
2	March 2025	
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1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Healthwatch East Sussex (HWES) makes its decisions in an open and transparent way and ensures the interests of the people of East Sussex are always put first. This policy outlines the decision-making process and steps taken to ensure HWES priorities are evidence-based, appropriate and lead to substantive impact for local people.
- 1.2 The governing regulations and standards for the delivery of the local Healthwatch function apply to Healthwatch East Sussex. These include:
 - The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 - referred to as Regulation 40 throughout this document.
 - Freedom of Information Act 2000
 - Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)
- 1.3 This policy clarifies the process by which Healthwatch East Sussex will make decisions on its workplan and priorities within the context of the obligations enshrined in the regulations and standards identified above.
- 1.4 Healthwatch East Sussex is commissioned by East Sussex County Council and delivered by East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV) on a hosted basis.

Organisational [ESCV], contractual and legal decisions are and will be made by the East Sussex Community Voice CIC Board of Directors as set out in the organisations Articles of Association. This policy does not relate to or guide these decisions.

2 Relevant decisions

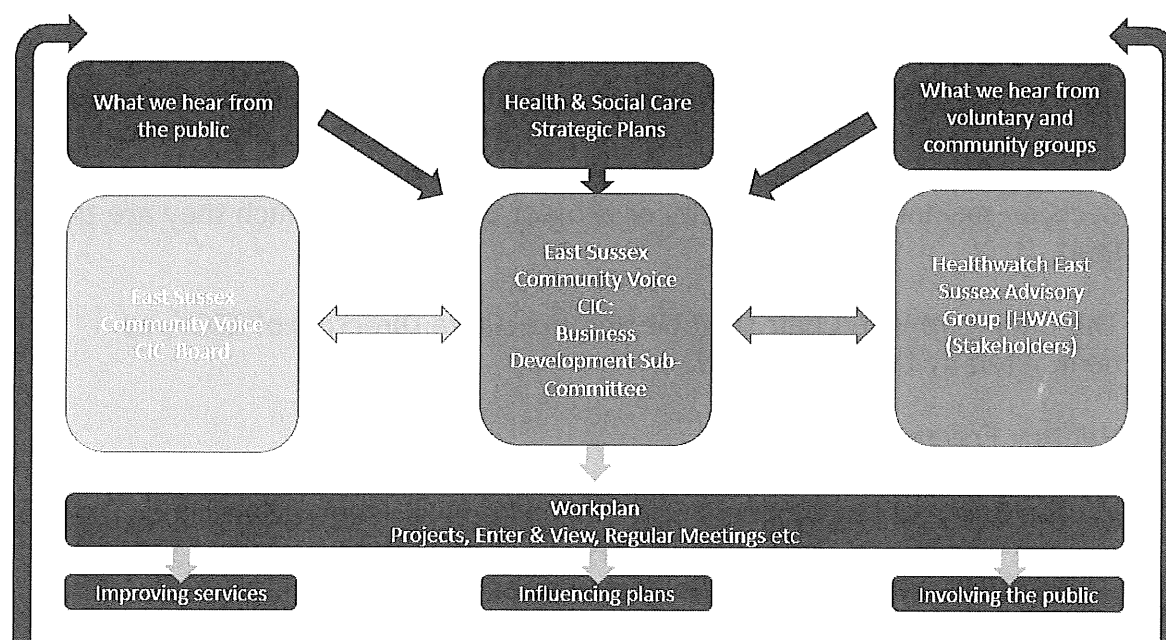
- 2.1 Regulation 40 (see 1.2) requires local Healthwatch (such as Healthwatch East Sussex) to have in place and publicly publish procedures for making ‘relevant decisions’.
- 2.2 Relevant decisions include:
- How to undertake Healthwatch activities
 - Which health and care services we are looking at covering with our activities
 - The resources we will use on our activities
 - Whether to request information from other organisations such as commissioners or providers
 - Whether to make a report or a recommendation
 - Which premises to visit under ‘Enter and View’ powers and when those premises are to be visited
 - Whether to refer a matter to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee or another scrutiny body
 - Whether to report a matter concerning our activities to another person
 - Any decisions about sub-contracting of services or activities
- 2.3 Relevant decisions **do not** include day-to-day activity that may be required to carry out exploratory work prior to making a relevant decision. Examples may include but are not restricted to: research, information gathering, data analysis, costings and other project development preparation.

3 Who has responsibility for Healthwatch East Sussex priority setting?

- 3.1 Healthwatch East Sussex prioritisation and decision-making is undertaken by the East Sussex Community Voice Business Development Sub-Committee under delegated authority provided by the East Sussex Community Voice CIC Board.
- 3.2 The Sub-Committee brings together internal expertise and lay representation to ensure Healthwatch East Sussex is effective, inclusive and transparent in its priority setting and decision-making.
- 3.3 The aims and responsibilities of the East Sussex Community Voice Business Development Sub-Committee are set out in its Terms of Reference. This also sets out:
- Purpose
 - Group membership, make-up and quoracy
 - Meeting frequency and administration

3.4 An overview of the decision-making process and where the Sub-Committee sits within it is set out in the diagram below.

Figure 1 - East Sussex Community Voice Prioritisation and Decision-making Process



4 East Sussex Community Voice Business Development Sub-Committee

4.1 The Business Development Sub-Committee will prioritise themes for investigation each year, including under the Healthwatch Programme. It will remain independent of any undue influence and be free to select the priorities it feels represent the best for the residents of East Sussex. Transparency, rigour and objectivity are the basis for the Committee's effective and successful working.

4.2 Aims of the Sub-Committee:

1. To ensure collective responsibility in setting the annual and multi-year priorities and strategic direction of East Sussex Community Voice.
2. To ensure the views of the public, partners, volunteers and staff are heard in the prioritisation process.
3. To ensure the views of the Healthwatch East Sussex Advisory Group (HWAG), VCSE Alliance and other bodies and are heard in the prioritisation process.
4. To ensure transparency and provide the public, partners and service users with a clear understanding of how East Sussex Community Voice agrees its priorities.

4.3 Business Development Sub-Committee Membership:

- 2 Non-Executive Directors from the East Sussex Community Voice CIC Board.
- 2 Volunteers.
- The East Sussex Community Voice Chief Executive.

Healthwatch staff will attend to provide information and support, such as to present project proposals, updates and identify impacts of work undertaken.

- 4.4 Business Development Sub-Committee members should not participate in the decision-making for any priority or project proposal for which they are the lead.
- 4.5 The Chair and Vice Chair shall be Non-Executive Directors of ESCV, as nominated by the ESCV Board.
- 4.6 Meeting Frequency:
- The Business Development Sub-Committee will meet at least four times a year (quarterly). Meetings will be held face-to-face wherever possible. Additional meetings may be organised as required.
 - Business Development Sub-Committee meetings will be scheduled in advance of East Sussex Community Voice CIC Board meetings (*where possible*).
- 4.7 Three sub-committee members are required for meetings to be quorate. Quoracy requires at least one attendee from each of the three constituent groups to be in attendance i.e. one Board member, one volunteer, and one staff member.

5 Healthwatch East Sussex Advisory Group

- 5.1 The Healthwatch East Sussex Advisory Group (HWAG) is a stakeholder group made up of representatives from ESCC, NHS and health and social care organisations, and other appropriate statutory and voluntary organisations, including both commissioners and providers. It meets quarterly.
- 5.2 The focus of the Advisory Group is:
- horizon-scanning and exploring strategic and operational developments in health and care services
 - sharing and triangulating public feedback captured by Healthwatch and its partners
 - monitoring the impact of changes to services brought about by Healthwatch recommendations

- 5.3 Meetings of the Advisory Group will take place quarterly and precede those of the Business Development Sub-Committee, so minutes and recommendations may be shared with the Committee to inform their decision-making.

6 Influences

- 6.1 The setting of the Healthwatch East Sussex workplan and priorities may be influenced by a range of sources including:

1. What Healthwatch East Sussex has heard from the public?

Healthwatch East Sussex records health and care feedback and issues throughout the year that could be potential priorities.

2. Health commissioning and delivery plans

Strategic meetings of national and local governing bodies, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees provide intelligence on current and forthcoming strategic health and care issues.

3. Social care commissioning plans

Social care commissioners plan forward decisions that impact on commissioning. Meetings of the East Sussex County Council cabinet and Social Care Committee provide further intelligence.

4. Intelligence from voluntary, community & social enterprise (VCSE) stakeholders

VCSE groups and organisations are encouraged to share local evidence, experiences, issues of concern and provide links with local voluntary sector infrastructure and charities delivering health and social care services.

5. Intelligence from other projects delivered by East Sussex Community Voice

The experiences of people gathered via the other projects that East Sussex Community Voice also deliver are a rich source of evidence and issues for Healthwatch East Sussex to investigate further.

6. Joint working proposals from neighbouring Healthwatch and Healthwatch England

Neighbouring local Healthwatch, especially those covered by the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS), will be undertaking work that either impacts on East Sussex residents or residents can contribute to. Healthwatch East Sussex works closely with its neighbours but needs to ensure it has capacity and that priorities are shared before it commits to any joint working. This also applies to Healthwatch England activity and campaigns.

7 The Prioritisation process

- 7.1 The Business Development Sub-Committee will decide the HWES workplan, ensuring there is a balance of projects and activity, and that it does not exceed the resource available. It aims to ensure a breadth of projects and activity across:
- Primary/Community Care
 - Acute Care
 - Social Care
 - Health Inequalities
 - Social Determinants
 - Urgent and unforeseen issues
- 7.2 Committee members will triangulate feedback from the public, voluntary sector and statutory stakeholders; horizon scanning forthcoming issues and opportunities, and use previous ESCV activity to set priorities.
- 7.3 The staff team will prepare proposals for projects or activities that respond to identified priorities, ensuring there is sufficient information to make decisions, which will be presented to the committee once they have been reviewed and endorsed by the management team.
- 7.4 At each meeting, proposals for potential projects will be considered. They will either be endorsed for adding to the workplan, identified as requiring additional work or rejected. All decisions will be recorded in the minutes of meetings.
- 7.5 The Committee will select priorities based on:
- the potential for most impact and change
 - maximising the voice of seldom heard groups
 - what can be realistically resourced
- 7.6 The Committee may delegate priority and project decision-making to the Committee Chair and Chief Executive in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.7 The agreed workplan will be shared with the public and stakeholders.

8 Review and monitoring

- 8.1 East Sussex Community Voice is continuously ‘horizon scanning’. The Committee will receive, or may request, intelligence to inform its decisions.
- 8.2 The Committee will receive updates on the progress of approved projects and activities at each meeting, so that they can assess the capacity of the organisation to undertake further work.

- 8.3 The Committee will operate by discussion and consensus (voting on issues only where clarity is needed) and be attended by two non-executive representatives from East Sussex Community Voice Board, who will report back to the Board after each meeting. They have the authority to escalate to the Board any activities that they consider to be contrary to the contract performance framework, the statutory duties or best practice.
- 8.4 The Committee is empowered by the ESCV Board to take agreed actions forward within the allocated budget and available resources and determine delivery timeframes.

9 Outcomes and Impact

- 9.1 The Committee will regularly receive copies of monitoring documents and reports, so they can review the effectiveness of Healthwatch East Sussex in carrying out its aims, statutory duties and delivering impact.
- 9.2 The Committee will oversee the monitoring of report and activity recommendations, learning from project closure/evaluation and feedback from partners to assess impact.

10 Review of the Healthwatch East Sussex Prioritisation Process

- 10.1 East Sussex Community Voice Board will review the decisions and activity of the Business Development Sub-Committee quarterly to assure itself that the governance structures are fit for purpose. It will do this through reporting from the Sub-Committee Chair and the Chief Executive.
- 10.2 This process will be reviewed annually by the East Sussex Community Voice Board. Additionally, it will be reviewed in response to a breach or any feedback that indicates a more urgent need for review.
- 10.3 Any amendments to this policy and the procedures governing the making of relevant decisions will require a simple majority of ESCV Board members voting in favour at an ESCV Board meeting.
- 10.4 This policy will be published on the website of Healthwatch East Sussex with any amended versions of the policy document uploaded as soon as is practicable.

11 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement

- 11.1 East Sussex Community Voice is committed to ensuring all decisions made are free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and

maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

- 11.2 East Sussex Community Voice will monitor this policy to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

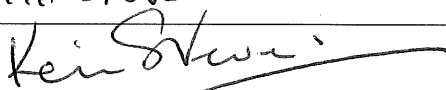
12 Compliance, monitoring and review

- 12.1 The Board of East Sussex Community Voice has the ultimate responsibility for implementing and reviewing this policy. The Board will scrutinise our work on disclosure to ensure that we meet our legal, ethical and operational commitments.
- 12.2 The East Sussex Community Voice Chief Executive holds the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- 12.3 This statement will be reviewed and updated on a two-year rolling basis by the East Sussex Community Voice Board.
- 12.4 This statement may be revised sooner if there is a change in working premises, conditions or laws directly affecting disclosure or any other aspect embedded in the document.

13 Approval and Adoption

Author	Simon Kiley, Head of Evidence & Insight
Sponsor	Veronica Kirwan, Chief Executive
Date of approval and adoption	12th March 2024
Date of next scheduled review	March 2026

Signature of East Sussex Community Voice CIC Board Chair

Name	KENT STEVENS
Signature	
Date	22nd March 2024