



Decision Making Policy

Introduction

Every Local Healthwatch must have a published Decision-Making Policy. This policy helps Healthwatch Redbridge make its decisions, prioritise, and choose what will go in their workplan as well as approving and accepting any other relevant work during the year. This guidance is for the Lead Officer, Chair, Board Members, Staff and all HWR volunteers.

Background Information

Healthwatch Redbridge wishes to ensure that the way it makes decisions and the outcome of any decisions made is transparent. We also wish to ensure that we always put the interests of the people of Redbridge first. Healthwatch Redbridge has therefore adopted the following decision-making policy, which also aims to ensure that all decisions are evidence-based and are made in a consistent and fair way.

As a company. Limited by guarantee, and a charity, decision-making within Healthwatch Redbridge is governed by:

- The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, CareTrusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 - *referred to as Regulation 40 throughout this document*;
- The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007, amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012;
- Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles);
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Healthwatch Redbridge's Articles of Association.

Regulation 40 requires Healthwatch Redbridge to have in place and to publish procedures for making 'relevant decisions'. These procedures must include:

- Provision as to who may make 'relevant decisions';
- Provision for involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions;
- Provision for dealing with breaches of any procedure referred to in the two previous points, which should include circumstances in which a breach would be referred to the local authority/authorities commissioning the Local Healthwatch service.

Purpose

The Decision-Making Policy is an essential part of running Healthwatch Redbridge, it ensures:

- Healthwatch Redbridge's legal requirement to demonstrate independence in the way we operate and make decisions. Without a published policy, the trademark license to operate as a local Healthwatch may be at risk.
- That we have a clear process that will support our Board and project working groups, in building a robust evidence base and prioritising the calls for our time and attention.
- That we demonstrate transparency and openness to all who have an interest in the work we do, enhancing our reputation as a trusted and credible partner.

• Who can make 'Relevant Decisions?'

In accordance with regulation and as set out in the company's Articles of Association, overall accountability for decision-making within Healthwatch Redbridge resides with the Board of Directors.

The Board's role is:

1. Setting and ensuring the delivery of the overall strategy;
2. Stewardship and accountability for the delivery of the strategy;
3. Governance and assurance.

Whenever possible, all 'relevant decisions' will be made at meetings of the Board held in public. When it is necessary to make 'relevant decisions' at other times they will be ratified, where appropriate, at the subsequent Board meeting held in public.

How are decisions made?

The potential scope of the work of Healthwatch Redbridge is vast - it has a responsibility for monitoring health and social care services for all adults, children, and young people in Redbridge, including those who are more vulnerable or may be excluded. This means we must prioritise the issues we focus on.

The main sources to inform our work programme are likely to come from:

- People's shared experiences of health and social care services.
- Evidence we proactively collect about specific areas of concern through the stories and enquiries we hear directly, including deliberative research, public surveys, and polls.
- National and local data sets that evidence issues affecting large numbers of the local population and those excluded.

This list is not exhaustive and other relevant sources of data will be considered. To prioritise, the Healthwatch Redbridge Board will carefully consider all sources of information and decide where it can add most value. Areas to be considered include but are not limited to:

- Issues that fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Redbridge delivers to its statutory remit.
- The relevance of the issue to local people; it must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people using health and social care services.
- How much change Healthwatch Redbridge can instigate. This enables us to make sure we are choosing areas where we can have the greatest impact. This is important to deliver the greatest return for our limited budget, maintain our independence and ensure we highlight issues for the attention of the health and care system.
- Does the change need to come from Healthwatch Redbridge - we need to consider if there are others who are better placed to resolve issues effectively, allowing us to focus more specifically.
- Finally, the Healthwatch Redbridge Board will consider our work as a full set of priorities, as together they need to have the greatest impact for people using health and social care services.

Healthwatch Redbridge Board and working group meetings are open to the public, and minutes recording decisions will be available via Healthwatch Redbridge's website.

Staff and volunteers will use a template such as a Project Initiation Document (PID) or produce a briefing report to support decisions made by the Board. This will also help to record decisions as part of the Healthwatch Redbridge meeting minutes. Please note, not every criterion will be used for every decision.

Recording and Publishing Decisions

All 'relevant decisions' will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting at which the decision was made. The minutes of all Board meetings are published on Healthwatch Redbridge's website, once they have been agreed by the Board as being a correct record of the meeting concerned.

Appeals Against Decisions

The Board of Healthwatch Redbridge will reconsider a decision where new evidence has become available, or if circumstances change, which might prompt it to reach a different decision; or where there is evidence that this decision-making process was not followed.

Provision for Involving Lay Persons or Volunteers in Such Decisions

Membership of the Board of Directors and sub committees of the Board of Healthwatch Redbridge include lay members.

Dealing with Breaches of These Procedures

If a decision is taken in the name of Healthwatch Redbridge without authorisation in the manner set out above, the Board will determine what action is needed, either to approve the decision retrospectively, or to reverse the decision. If the breach of the agreed procedure is considered to have also breached the contract between Healthwatch Redbridge and Redbridge Council, it will be reported to the Council and further action agreed.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement

Healthwatch Redbridge 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, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Healthwatch Redbridge will monitor this policy to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

Review of Procedures

The Board of Healthwatch Redbridge will review the effectiveness of the decision-making procedures set out in this document annually.

Responsible Manager:
Cathy Turland, Chief Executive Officer

Reviewed: 29/04/2022

Next review: 29/04/2026