

Healthwatch Kent Information & Signposting Service Operational Policy

Context:

Healthwatch Kent has a statutory requirement to provide information about health and social care to the people of Kent as well as deliver signposting to help people navigate, what can be, a complex system and help them access the right support.

The service is accessible, person-centred and responsive to the needs of individuals and consequently improves people's experiences of accessing health and social care services within Kent.

In addition, the service enables us to gather vital information about people's experiences of health and social care, and so provides evidence about what is good, and what is not so good for decision makers to implement improvements.

Our staff team tasked with the responsibility of providing this service will comply with the following customer care and operating standards when dealing with members of the public, providers of health and social care, voluntary and community organisations, statutory and funding bodies.

Customer Care - Our Signposting Officers will:

- Treat all calls / contacts politely, with courtesy and respect at all times.
- Deal with enquiries in an open and fair manner.
- Listen carefully so that we have a clear understanding of the issue, concern, query, or comment.
- Clarify expectations from the individual
- Make it clear what Healthwatch Kent can and cannot do
- Ensure that all information is treated confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- Provide good quality information that is suited to the individuals' needs.
- Phone the caller back if this is requested or considered appropriate or when further research is required.
- Use language which is clear, easy to understand, free from jargon and appropriate for the caller.
- For difficult/rude/abusive phone calls refer to the policy and discuss with Signposting Team Lead if the contact meets the criteria for action.
- Refer concerns which may relate to Safeguarding to a Safeguarding Lead. Update the Safeguarding log as necessary.

Operating Standards - Our Signposting officer will:

- When answering a telephone call, staff will greet the caller and identify the service with “Good morning/afternoon/Hello, Healthwatch Kent/Healthwatch Medway, (name of staff member) speaking, how can I help?”
- Record the call details onto the Database and contact log.
- Acknowledge and respond to all telephone messages within 5 working days of receipt.
- Ensure that all out of office messages include details of alternative available contacts.
- Acknowledge all written enquiries (including email or web) and aim to respond in 5 working days.
- Provide information on numbers and types of calls in response to requests from other members of the Healthwatch Kent or Healthwatch Medway Team.
- Provide full details if a caller wishes to make a complaint about Healthwatch Kent
- When appropriate, identify issues or trends relevant to the wider work of Healthwatch Kent and bring these to the attention of the Intelligence Officer or raise at the next Intelligence Gathering Group.
- Complete feedback in a timely fashion for the Service provider reports and participate in their review when required.