

# Decision-making Policy

September 2025

# Decision-making Policy and Procedure for all Staff and Volunteers

<b>Policy Title</b>	Decision-making Policy for all Staff and Volunteers
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## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Healthwatch Lambeth (HWL) makes its decisions in an open and transparent way and ensures the interests of the people of Lambeth are always put first. This policy and associated procedures outline the steps taken to ensure decisions are evidence based and lead to substantive impact in the community.

The governing regulations and standards are:

- [The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities \(Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch\) Regulations 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#), referred to as Regulation 40 in this document.
- [Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Seven Principles of Public Life – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Charities Act 2022 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Charity Commission – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Children Act 2004](#)
- [The Care Act 2014](#)

This policy applies to all relevant decisions made by Healthwatch Lambeth.

## 2. WHAT ARE RELEVANT DECISIONS?

Regulation 40 requires Healthwatch Lambeth to have in place and publish procedures for making relevant decisions. Relevant decisions include:

- How to undertake our activities.
- Which health and care services we are looking at covering with our activities.
- The amounts we will spend on our activities.
- Whether to request information.
- Whether to make a report or a recommendation.
- Which premises to Enter and View and when those premises are to be visited.
- Whether to refer a matter to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- Whether to report a matter concerning our activities to another person.
- Any decisions about sub-contracting.
- Relevant decisions do not include day-to-day activity that may be required to carry out exploratory work prior to making a relevant decision.

### **3. WHO MAY MAKE SUCH DECISIONS?**

The Healthwatch Lambeth Board, or the designated officer (Chief Executive), is responsible for making relevant decisions. The Board will have the power to delegate relevant decision-making to the Chief Executive, for example pieces of work which do not have a substantive impact on staff or financial resources.

An appendix to this policy sets out the scope and delegated powers of two Board subcommittees and their reporting responsibilities to the Board:

- Finance Risk and Assurance
- Strategy and Programmes

All relevant decisions, including those delegated to the Chief Executive, will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting at which the decision was made. Approved minutes of all Board meetings are also available on request.

Once a decision has been made, the staff team is responsible for implementation and delivery, with an agreed reporting process to Board.

The Board of Trustees may reconsider a decision:

- where new data become available.
- if circumstances change.
- where there is evidence that this decision-making process was not followed.

As a private company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, decision-making by HWL is also covered in our Articles of Association.

## **4. INVOLVING LAY PERSONS OR VOLUNTEERS IN SUCH DECISIONS**

The Healthwatch Lambeth Board is composed of volunteers (someone who is not a paid employee), who have broad professional and other backgrounds including but not limited to health and social care. To minimise the risk of conflict of interest and preserve independence, people employed in public sector decision-making roles in Lambeth and elected council members are not eligible to be on the Board.

HWL aims to secure a wide range of contributions to decisions about priorities and activities. Wherever possible, the views and insights of local people, volunteers and partner organisations contribute to decision-making.

## **5. HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE?**

The potential scope of the work of Healthwatch Lambeth is outlined in the Health & Social Care Act (2012). Independent local Healthwatch in England are responsible for enabling the voices, views, and experiences of people using health and care services to be heard and to influence the quality of and access to services. This includes adults and children and young people in Lambeth, including those who are most vulnerable or may be excluded. This is an extremely broad remit therefore we have to prioritise issues to focus on. The main sources to inform our work programme are likely to come from:

- People's experiences of health and social care services that they share by various routes including our local networks and direct enquiries to our office
- Evidence we collect about specific areas of concern through project work listening to people's lived experience, including through deliberative research, community outreach, public surveys, and polls.
- National and local information from various sources about the difficulties that especially marginalised groups experience in getting their health and care needs met.

This list is not exhaustive and other relevant information may be considered.

To prioritise, HWL Board will carefully consider all sources of information and decide where the organisation can add most value. Criteria to include but are not limited to issues that:

- Fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Lambeth delivers its statutory remit.
- Matter to local people; our role is to be the independent voice of people needing health and social care in Lambeth.
- Focus on groups that are least well heard and most in need of good services
- Taken together are in line with the overall strategic direction of all our work, take account of priorities determined by local people and achieve the greatest impact for people using or in need of health and social care services.

And

- How much change HWL can bring about especially where there is inequality in services. We try to choose areas where we can have the greatest impact on the most in need so as to deliver the greatest return for our budget, highlight issues for improvement to the health and care system. We will develop a theory of change for each prospective project to consider the potential impact of each project.
- Where Healthwatch Lambeth is best placed to achieve the change. This is so we do not focus on things that others can do more easily and effectively and can avoid duplication.

## **6. DEALING WITH BREACHES OF PROCEDURE**

If a decision is taken in the name of HWL without authorisation as set out in this policy document, the Board will determine what action is needed. This may be to either 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 HWL and Lambeth Local Authority (our main contractor), it will be reported to the Local Authority and further action agreed between the Local Authority and HWL.

## **7. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT**

Healthwatch Lambeth is committed to ensuring all decisions made meet our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the Human Rights Act (1998). In particular we seek to actively promote equality and good relations between people of different backgrounds and equality groups, and to eliminate unlawful discrimination. We consider it core to our responsibilities to highlight poor care especially where there is a risk of degrading or inhuman treatment and to promote dignity and respect in all aspects of health and social care.

Healthwatch Lambeth will monitor and report on implementation of this policy to ensure decisions meet the requirements of the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act.

## **8. PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW**

Healthwatch Lambeth undertakes to:

- Publish the most up to date policy document on the Healthwatch Lambeth website.
- Review and obtain Board approval to this decision-making policy every three years.
- Ensure all HWL staff are familiar with the policy and refresh their understanding and awareness of the need for open and transparent decision-making by reading the policy regularly, at a minimum after review by the Board.
- Publish minutes from Board meetings where decisions are made in a timely manner on the HWL website. Where decisions are made outside of board meetings (see policy on Chair approval), they will be ratified at the subsequent Board meeting.



## APPENDIX 1 – DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA ON PRIORITIES

To prioritise, Healthwatch Lambeth will carefully consider all sources of information and decide where it can add most value. Some areas to be considered include but are not limited to:

- That the issues fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Lambeth delivers to its statutory remit. We will listen to people, especially from those whom we seldom heard and ensure compliance with our safeguarding policies in relating to vulnerable adults and/or children.
- How much the issue matters to local people. It must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people in health and social care. We will use people's feedback about services through our information and signposting service and 'Have your say' form in our website.
- How much change Healthwatch Lambeth can bring about. We will develop a theory of change for each prospective project to consider the implications of each project. 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 budget, maintain our independence and ensure we bring issues to the attention of the health and care system. We will consider partnership boards or accountable bodies to take it forward.
- Does the change need to come from Healthwatch Lambeth? We will focus on things that we can do more easily and effectively and avoid duplicating others' initiatives.
- The work is part of full set of priorities so together they can deliver the greatest impact for people using health and social care services. We will consider opportunity for joint-working and cross-cutting projects; complementing each other's skills/capacity; balance attention to all age groups.
- We have the capacity, and our staff and volunteers are skilled to undertake the project. We will consider staff and volunteer time.

## APPENDIX 2 – DELEGATED POWERS OF BOARD SUBCOMMITTEES

Healthwatch Lambeth has 2 subcommittees:

- Strategy and Programmes (SAP)
- Finance Risk and Assurance (FRA)

**Chairing:** each is chaired by a trustee. The FRA is chaired by the Treasurer.

**Membership:** each subcommittee requires at least 3 trustees to be present to be quorate.

**Attendance:** each meeting is attended by the Chief Executive and relevant staff according to the agenda.

**Meetings:** each sub committee meets at least 4 times a year.

**Minutes:** formal minutes are taken.

**Reporting:** each subcommittee reports quarterly to the Board.

### Strategy and Programmes

The group is responsible for

- a. Reviewing priorities and strategic direction of the organisation.
- b. Setting and monitoring performance indicators and outcomes.
- c. Reviewing projects and programmes.
- d. Reviewing governance processes.

### Finance Risk and Assurance

The group is responsible for

- a. Risk and Board Assurance.
- b. Finance and Resourcing.

Broadly, a.) considers immediate matters arising, and b.) focuses on looking ahead including fundraising.

Terms of reference of each committee are set out in separate documents.