

Local Healthwatch Engagement Toolkit Listening Tours





This toolkit has been developed by Healthwatch West Sussex using the experience and learning gained from carrying out our successful Listening Tour programme.

This model offers the following benefits to local Healthwatch

- High-levels of local involvement and awareness raising
- Great return on investment
- Achieves good levels of general health and care insight
- Can also be used to gather more specific insight
- Increases collaborative working with organisations and key stakeholders
- Creates sustainable links with local clubs, organisations and interest groups

One of the most important outcomes of this approach has been that we can evidence to commissioners that local people are not only willing but are keen to share experiences and get involved. This may be as a result of the effort we make in going to where people are, to hear about their experiences.

We've also successfully recruited local people with special interests, to participate in initiatives through our tours.

We invite other local Healthwatch to use all or part of this toolkit - together we speak louder. If you would like more information or copies of any of the resources detailed please email helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk.



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Getting Care



Context

West Sussex, has a population of 806,900 (2011 Census), spread over a vast area, including a large rural population, urban and coastal towns and some of the country's most deprived areas.

The county has multi-layers of local authority (county council, eight district and borough councils, and many town and parish councils) and three Clinical Commissioning Groups.

‘We quickly realised we needed to get proactively closer to local people’

In 2017 Healthwatch West Sussex faced significant cuts to funding to become one of the lowest, local authority funded Healthwatch per population head.

To stay effective with such a small budget we had to change the way we worked. We could no longer afford walk-in face to face services or large awareness campaigns. We quickly realised we needed to get proactively closer to local people. The only logical way to do this was to focus the whole team's energy on specific geographic areas throughout the year.

Learning: After our first exhausting tour we adjusted our thinking on how many tours would be possible in a year. This adjustment allows us to maintain a good balance between tours and other priority work.

We now plan to be on full ‘tour’ twice a year. Touring each area for 4 to 6 weeks at a time. Based on what we hear we can also target “spot tours” as and when needed.

No two tours are the same - there isn't a one size fits all model!



Hello



Hi

What's Involved

Robust planning takes place one to two months before the Tour Launch Event. We involve all team members and our fantastic volunteers - you never know who may have a contact or some great insight!

It's important to build-up internal enthusiasm and a shared, common interest in the tour.

Step 1: Developing local knowledge

- Desktop research to gather insight (external data)
- Review existing intelligence for the area (e.g. what have we already heard or know)
- 'Walk the patch' - this is to find out what is in the area (including any specific seldom heard communities) and who to contact or ask to help.

This provides a rich opportunity to begin to network and to find out about the area in more detail. We blatantly ask people who we should be talking to, pop our heads into local shops, hairdressers etc.

- Communication to specific stakeholders such as the mayor and local councillors and council workers, police and wardens, third sector organisations, to raise awareness of the tour and to gain more local insight



Learning:

It's important to warm everyone up before you arrive on their patch. This can be done face to face, by email communication and through social media posts, to build the momentum, create links and raise awareness.



Step 2: Planning communication

- Join closed Facebook community and special interest groups
- We add an incentive for people to engage by offering a prize. To enter people are asked to like our page, share and leave feedback. We manage to get donations from businesses or kept the prize spend to £30 per tour
- Find out what local media is available
- Adapt posters and communication material to fit with the local area
- Develop a series of social media posts - for before, during and after tour activities

Talk to us...



Step 3: Planning activities



- Identify and plan for a launch event: so far we've had a Funbulance, taken part in the town's Pancake Olympics and started off at the central supermarket at Halloween
- Contact local libraries and community centres to arrange to have banners/ noticeboards on display throughout the tour.

Learning: We focus on being prepared and on creating photo opportunities. Real-time social media posts can be effective.

We believe it is important to tailor the noticeboard information to the time of year and location. These boards allow us to take key health and care messages into the community. We promote the location of the boards through our social media.

To do this we work with local commissioners and public health and prepare the boards in advance of the tour. We always make them highly visible and with simple messages.



- Contact clubs and organisations to ask to piggyback existing activities

We offer to bring cakes or to provide an activity such as our Teddy Bear Hospital, Health Bingo Game, scout/guide leader activity resource (we are currently developing a Healthwatch badge to accompany this).

We make sure we approach clubs and organisations that have a mixture of ages and demographics - so that we can get a broad range of views and experiences when we are talking with people.

We use our existing intelligence and research to inform the planning for what conversations to have with local people.

- Contact local surgeries, hospitals, care homes schools etc. to agree a date for an enter and view activity
- Carry out risk assessments and gain any necessary approval and support for specific activities such as: talking to people at train stations; on the high street and at or in local shops
- Make-up a schedule of events and circulate this widely. (We also have an event calendar on our website which shows all the activities we are carrying out)
- Make up the engagement resources ahead of the activity (we use checklist for this)
- Plan to provide sufficient resources (1.1.2, nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44)



Learning:

We're now looking at how we can work with local commissioners to identify what they do not know, so that we can use the tours to support them in understanding the local dynamics, experiences and views, so these can shape proposed initiatives (1.1.2, nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44).

We've developed story pads for collecting peoples' experiences and demographic information (easy to use, saves on printing and look professional).

Learning:

We plan to have about 3-4 activities per week to allow us the time to add in additional events as opportunities arise.

We've struggled to work with schools. For this reason, we talked to local teachers to find out what would make their lives easier, so we have a way of getting our foot in the door. We also recognise that we need to be prepared to do early morning and late night engagement, so we can truly reached out to all local people.

People really open up when we are present approachable adaptable and fearless

Learning:

Starting a friendly and open conversation has proven to be the most effective way to tease out rich stories and encourage individuals to share their views. To compliment this, we have a prompt sheet or just one or two specific questions to collect targeted intelligence.

All our team (staff and volunteers) have Healthwatch branded polo shirts and fleeces, ID and use their first names.



- It's important to respect the right of individuals in local communities to get involved as much or as little as they are able or wish to ([1.1.1, nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44)).

We ask people if they would like to hear the outcome from what they and other local people have shared with us. We collect email addresses and make sure they receive a copy of any resulting report. People can also subscribe to our monthly "Heads-Up" e-newsletter.

- We take photos - to make our reports and social media posts more appealing.



Learning:

We found having a script restricts us when we're having a health and care conversations with local people.

It is however, essential you take a moment to explain, in simple terms, who you are and what your role is. This helps people to trust you with their story.

Learning:

We also seek to recruit and sign-up local groups to stay involved in the future. These “It Starts With You” Groups, are an idea that we’ve developed using Healthwatch Lincolnshires’ Healthwatch Hub model.

This provides us with a way of maintaining two-way communications with groups when we are not in the area. Supporting and promoting this can achieves a sustainable community engagement for current and future health and wellbeing initiatives, through the exchange of information and ideas is an important standard in community engagement (1.1.1 and 1.1.3, nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44)

Learning:

We’ve learnt to manage expectations. When many people have no previous knowledge or awareness of Healthwatch, we are clear in saying we can’t make everything better, or that things will definitely improve but that we are tenacious in making sure peoples’ voices are heard.

Step 4: Reporting and following up

It is important to recognise, value and share the knowledge, skills and experiences of all partners, particularly those from the local community (1.1.1, nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44).

Feeding back the result of our engagement to the local communities is important to building credibility and outcomes (1.15, nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44). We always plan time and communication for after the tour, so we can analyse what we have heard and how we are going to report on this.

- Have social media posts ready to say thank you, to inform people what the next steps are going to be and to report on numbers, e.g. how many people we spoke to, etc. Also give examples of good practice found within the area.



‘I have no complaints about any service. We are very lucky to have the NHS’.

An example of the images we shared on social media

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Pulborough, Petworth and Midhurst Listening Tour 2017



- Work with providers before publishing a report to give them an opportunity to provide feedback and say how they will respond to any recommendations, if made.

This also allows us to routinely evaluate the impact the community engagement has had on peoples’ health and wellbeing and health inequalities, including any unexpected or unknown effects.

- Publish and circulate the report to all key stakeholders.
- Make sure it is available in each of the locations where an activity took place and all community centres and resources.

Learning:

We realise we need to be ready to hold a post tour local event to enable health and care conversations to continue with key stakeholders sitting in the room.

Ten Top Tips

- 1 Preparation:** for every week you're on tour we recommend at least a week of preparation; research and planning is needed
- 2 Communication** - using a variety of standard and more creative methods, before, during and after the tour Activities to let people know you're coming. Activities to let people know you're there and to keep the conversations going afterwards. Activities to let people hear what you've heard and what is happens next.
- 3 Work as a team** - every member of your team plays a role in the tour and volunteers are key team members
- 4 Take a common approach** - our key aims from every tour activity is to: increase awareness of Healthwatch and collect insight.
- 5 Time management and core business** -touring is a big time and energy investment but don't lose sight of 'business as usual' tasks. Factor in time to give attention to your day to day work. Add an out-of-office message stating you are touring to manage peoples' expectations.
- 6 Grassroots networking** - Involve local partners and stakeholders, who can provide a captive audience but also engage with people who aren't regularly accessing services. Engage with hairdressers, have market stalls on market day and attend community events; spend time in local supermarkets.
- 7 Legacy** - build relationships and have a strategy for sustaining them, e.g. regular communication mechanisms and recruiting volunteers
- 8 Follow-up** - at the planning phase and at every point through the tour, we look for opportunities and ways to follow-up. Having a 'follow-up' strategy is essential to ensure we thank and acknowledge the input from local people and that we let them know what happens next and keep them informed of progress and outcomes.
- 9 Create Once, Use Everywhere approach** - when designing and producing communication for feeding back we use a 'create once, use everywhere' approach as much as possible, to save producing different documents and reports for different groups or stakeholders. This also avoids the trap of fragmentation. Keep reports concise - show off key highlights, headlines and use lots of images and infographics to maximise impact.
- 10 Sharing good news** - whilst we know people are often more willing to share their frustrations, we do hear a lot of good news and we have learnt to make sure we balance our communications with positive views.

Touring is hard work, productive but also fun and worthwhile.

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