



WY&H Health and Care Partnership Board

1 December 2020

Summary report	
Item No:	37/20
Item:	Review of the Public Participation at the WY&H Partnership Board
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Executive summary	
<p>At the first meeting of the WY&H Partnership Board (4 June 2019), members received a paper from the West and North Yorkshire Healthwatch organisations which made recommendations for ensuring the members of the public are able to participate in the WY&H Partnership Board meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that the arrangements would be reviewed after a year, to test the effectiveness of these arrangements and make any further recommendations. The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of this review.</p>	
Recommendations and next steps	
<p>The WY&H Partnership Board is asked to consider the recommendations in the report as follows:</p> <p>Through reviewing delivery against the recommendations in the initial report, we have identified a range of practical actions that should be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as there is a Freedom of Information Request page on the WY&H Partnership website, we could also add a public questions page where questions and responses from the WY&H Partnership Board would be logged; • add questions and responses to website records for the WY&H Partnership Board meetings for 2020; • ahead of each meeting, a Healthwatch representative will check that the questions from the previous WY&H Partnership Board and their responses have been published online; and • develop a range of options for people to submit questions whilst the meetings take place through Video Conferencing. <p>Other specific suggestions have been listed in the review table for further consideration by the WY&H Partnership Team, in particular, whether the papers for the meeting can be published further in advance of the meeting to allow the public more time to read and review what is being discussed.</p> <p>The most important areas for development are encouraging a greater range of people to submit questions to the WY&H Partnership, and creating dialogue between those asking questions and WY&H Partnership Board members. The Board is often presented with questions and with feedback, which is</p>	

really good practice, but the interaction does not feel continuous and there is little scope for discussion.

Wider interaction should assist us in showcasing how the public's questions influence the work of the WY&H Partnership; we could show this through the information we choose to share, or the discussions that take place.

It is important to complete some further work to look at how we can enhance the interaction of the public with the WY&H Partnership Board, through both formal and informal routes, and utilise the support of partners in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector and Healthwatch to offer some assistance.

Review of the Public Participation at the WY&H Partnership Board

Introduction

1. At the first meeting of the West Yorkshire and Harrogate (WY&H) Health and Care Partnership Board in June 2019, Healthwatch across the footprint presented a paper that advised on the optimum way to administer public questions and statements, to ensure that both the public felt heard, and the WY&H Partnership Board members gave consideration to the public's queries and concerns.
2. The report recommended a clear process for delivering public questions and recommendations, all of which were accepted by the WY&H Partnership Board.
3. This paper reviews the delivery of public questions at the WY&H Partnership Board and offers suggestions on how this could be enhanced.
4. Consideration must be given to the impact that the General Election and the COVID-19 pandemic have had on our approach to public questions. At our December 2019 WY&H Partnership Board meeting, questions from the public could only be received in advance and could not be asked at the meeting; they could not be responded to in the meeting, but they were acknowledged.
5. In response to the COVID-19, since June 2020, WY&H Partnership Board meetings have taken place via Video Conference (specifically on Microsoft Teams) , there are elements of the recommendations that have not been feasible to offer.

How did we enhance our understanding?

6. There are two key elements to this progress review:
 - a) **Gathered feedback about the experience of asking a public question:** A survey was developed and sent to anyone who has submitted a question or statement to the Partnership Board in the last 18 months.
 - b) **Desktop review of whether the recommendations from the initial report have been delivered:** Healthwatch staff have reviewed the range of recommendations made and commented on whether or not these are being delivered.

What did we learn?

Feedback from those who have submitted questions to previous meetings

7. 10 different individuals have submitted questions to the WY&H Partnership Board across the last 18 months. Responses to our survey were received from three of those people, so the information provided in this section is based upon the experience of a small number of contacts.
8. These survey respondents submitted their public questions using a variety of the available mechanisms, and none of them asked to remain anonymous.
9. When asked why they had submitted questions, there was a focus on accountability, with questioners using the opportunity to seek assurance and remind the WY&H Partnership Board of their answerability to the public. There was also interest in how the NHS was being delivered, and a request to find out more when topics were not covered in the papers.

10. Respondents agreed that there was clear information about how to submit a question, and that the mechanisms to do so were suitable. They also all reported feeling comfortable about submitting a question to the WY&H Partnership Board again in the future.
11. There were mixed levels of satisfaction with the responses received, both in the meeting, and afterward, and mixed reports of understanding of where to find the public question responses online. Where there was dissatisfaction with the response received, there was a request for more timely responses that provide a full answer to the question asked. 2 out of 3 respondents stated that they could neither agree nor disagree with the statements relating to whether their question was valued by the Board and whether Board members were respectful in their response.
12. Respondents were grateful that the opportunity to ask these questions was in place, and complimented the support offered to help them ask questions. Publishing the questions and responses online emphasised the importance of asking questions in these types of meetings.
13. The respondents also offered a great deal of constructive feedback about how public question delivery could be enhanced. To increase the involvement of the public, suggestions were made about allowing questions from the public throughout the meeting, or offering a longer public questions slot on the agenda. Questioners were interested to look at how public questions could feel more like a dialogue, either within or outside of the meeting, as currently one question and one answer doesn't facilitate the fullest involvement.
14. In terms of making the public more aware of the opportunity to ask questions, respondents suggested that the papers could be published earlier, links to these could be available on local authority websites, and a prominent statement could be on the WY&H Health and Care Partnership website. Information about the meeting could be shared by the press. For those who have submitted a question previously, papers could be routinely sent through to them.
15. In terms of accessibility of the meeting, there was a request for PA systems and hearing loops to be available at all Board meetings held in public buildings.

Desktop review of recommendations

16. The Partnership Board agreed a set of core principles around the delivery of public questions; progress against many of these is captured in the recommendation log below. However, the two initial principles speak to the spirit in which we offer the opportunity to ask public questions:
 - We care about giving people a valuable opportunity to ask questions and make deputations or statements in public at the Partnership Board.
 - We aim to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to ask a question of the Board or make a statement to the Board.
17. As only 10 people across 18 months have submitted questions to the Board, we need to give consideration to whether we are doing enough to raise awareness of the opportunity to ask questions, or whether we are capturing the breadth of questions we are asked through other mechanisms to influence the work of the Board. This is a valuable opportunity and the Partnership is open to being held to account; we could look in to considering questions submitted to other forums when relevant to what is being presented to the WY&H Partnership Board.

Recommendation	Progress	Outstanding actions
Delivery of the meeting – before the meeting starts		
The meeting will be held in an accessible building close to public transport connections, and should be webcast. Consideration should be given to the time of the meeting, and whether that excludes participation for certain groups of people.	Up to June 2020, meetings were held in public buildings and were webcast	Consider how accessible the current Microsoft Teams meetings are for the public
The date, location and timings of the next meeting should be published well in advance of the meeting, alongside information about the opportunity of asking a question or submitting a statement to the Board.	Meeting dates are published on the WY&H Partnership website significantly in advance of the meeting	Consider whether meetings could be listed on Council calendars on local authority websites
Papers for the meeting will be published at least 7days prior to the meeting to allow the public time to consider the content of the agenda.	All meeting papers have been published 7 days in advance for the meetings	Consider whether papers could be published further in advance of the meeting
Reports will be written in plain-English wherever possible, or have a plain-English summary attached to them. There should be an expectation that there will be challenge from Partnership Board members if the papers are not accessible.	Cover sheets with summaries of key information are attached to every Board paper Expectation that Partnership Board members will challenge is still being actioned	
Clear information should be provided with the papers about the purpose of public questions, deputations and statements, and how these can be submitted.	All information about how to submit a public question to the Partnership Board can be found at this link	
Support will be available through an independent voice organisation (such as Healthwatch or local advocacy provider) to assist someone in understanding the Board papers and in formulating any questions that they may have.	Support is available to submit questions from the WY&H Team, and is offered if individuals approach Healthwatch.	More information could be provided about seeking support from an independent organisation

Recommendation	Progress	Outstanding actions
Questions submitted before the meeting should be provided to the Partnership Board to allow people time to pull together information in response to the question, and to be ready for further discussion around that question.	Most questions are submitted on the day of the Partnership Board meeting or the evening before. This sometimes restricts the ability to respond fully in the meeting.	
From one hour before the start of the meeting, public question forms will be available at the meeting room, with a ballot box in which you can place anonymous questions.	Up to June 2020, this was available at all public meetings	Consider how we can offer an equivalent option to the public
Opening of the ballot box and review of questions will take place 15mins before the start of the meeting.		
In the 30mins before the meeting begins, some members of the Partnership Board and Partnership team will be available for members of the public to speak with. This gives the opportunity for people to familiarise themselves with Board members and feel more comfortable asking a question.		
Delivery of the meeting – during the meeting		
There will be a dedicated agenda item for public questions, deputations and statements at the start of the meeting.	The meeting agenda always has an item on public questions	Consider whether public questions at the start of the meeting remains the most appropriate way to ask questions
There is a clear expectation that all Board members will behave in a way that encourages members of the public to come forward with their questions. The Board will be welcoming, calm, will actively listening, and be respectful of the person.	This positive manner has been observed in meetings, but small amounts of feedback suggest that those asking questions don't always feel respected or valued	Consider what else can be done to make the person asking the question feel valued

Recommendation	Progress	Outstanding actions
Wherever possible, a concise verbal response will be given to the question posed, with an opportunity to provide further information verbally or in writing at a later date.	This is the standard process for responding to questions at this meeting	
All verbal responses should be easy to understand and jargon-free.		
Consideration should be given to whether the question has prompted any further actions from the Board, or influenced the perspective of the Board regarding the agenda item.	No clear evidence that this is taking place.	Consider how we could showcase the way that public questions have influenced the Board, e.g. through information we provide, through debate that takes place
The Healthwatch representative, co-opted members and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector representative will hold a “jargon red-card” which can be raised at any point in the meeting to make it clear that something hasn’t been clearly explained or was overly jargonised.	Co-opted members, Healthwatch and VCSE representatives routinely question jargon	
Delivery of the meeting – after the meeting		
All written responses to be provided to the individual within 10 days.	The partnership works to provide a full answer within the 10 days. This is not always possible, depending on the complexity of the questions, some of which have a significant number of sub-questions. The Covid pandemic has also meant that sometimes, replies have taken a little longer to co-ordinate than usual.	

Recommendation	Progress	Outstanding actions
All public questions will be published on the website with the response given.	These are published as part of the minutes of the previous meeting.	Add questions and responses to a page on the WY&H Partnership website
All written responses will be added to the papers for the next meeting as an item for information.	This is done as part of the minutes of the previous meeting.	
All questioners to be provided with contact information for the relevant programme, place or organisation lead to enable them to continue discussion around their topic of interest, and to be offered further opportunities for involvement with the Partnership.	Information on the WY&H Partnership website indicates where people interested in submitting a public question can get involved.	Check whether proactive suggestion around involvement is sent to people who have submitted questions
There is a role for Healthwatch and the co-opted members in making sure this process is being completed correctly, and that the answers provided feel full and appropriate. If this is not the case, then there is an expectation on those Board members that they will speak out and challenge this.	Healthwatch has been invited to review the process to date to highlight progress	Review at each meeting whether responses have been shared and answer the question posed.

18. Healthwatch also suggested some wider considerations, such as completion of this review. It's been a hallmark of the Partnership Board to bring lived experience in to the Board for discussion, with specialist groups attending to share their lived experiences, and Healthwatch presenting findings from local engagement work. This is a really strong element of the WY&H Partnership meetings, and helps all members to focus on lived experience when considering significant decisions about health and care in West Yorkshire and Harrogate.
19. The initial public questions paper submitted to the Board also talked about the lack of awareness of the opportunity to ask public questions, and the importance of ensuring there are alternatives to asking a public question when trying to understand the work of the WY&H Partnership. This is an area which still needs further development.
20. In addition to the paper, several comments about public involvement were noted in the minutes of the June 2019 meeting. Many of these were about inclusive engagement and co-production, utilising existing networks, and having patient voice front and centre in WY&H Partnership Board meetings. A great deal of this has been embedded in to specific areas of work for the WY&H Partnership, rather than being the focus of the WY&H Partnership Board.
21. One of the specific points made linked to the power and importance of using technology to increase accessibility of asking questions. This is an area where more development work could take place; we are now meeting exclusively online, so there is a need to revisit whether or not the opportunity this presents is being utilised.

Our recommendations

22. Through reviewing delivery against the recommendations in the initial report, we have identified a range of practical actions that should be taken:
 - as there is a Freedom of Information Request page on the WY&H Partnership website, we could also add a public questions page where questions and responses from the WY&H Partnership Board would be logged;
 - add questions and responses to website records for the WY&H Partnership Board meetings for 2020;
 - ahead of each meeting, a Healthwatch representative will check that the questions from the previous WY&H Partnership Board and their responses have been published online; and
 - develop a range of options for people to submit questions whilst the meetings take place through Video Conferencing.
23. Other specific suggestions have been listed in the review table for further consideration by the WY&H Partnership Team, in particular, whether the papers for the meeting can be published further in advance of the meeting to allow the public more time to read and review what is being discussed.
24. The most important areas for development are encouraging a greater range of people to submit questions to the WY&H Partnership, and creating dialogue between those asking questions and WY&H Partnership Board members. The WY&H Partnership Board is often presented with questions and with feedback, which is really good practice, but the interaction does not feel continuous and there is little scope for discussion.

25. Wider interaction should assist us in showcasing how the public's questions influence the work of the WY&H Partnership; we could show this through the information we choose to share, or the discussions that take place.
26. It is important to complete some further work to look at how we can enhance the interaction of the public with the WY&H Partnership Board, through both formal and informal routes, and utilise the support of partners in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector and Healthwatch to offer some assistance.

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