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Healthwatch Sandwell Advisory Board

Decision making Policy (DMP) – Escalation report

What is a relevant decision?

Section 3 of the Healthwatch Sandwell DMP details what is the definition of a relevant decision: paragraph 3.1 details decisions to be taken by the Healthwatch Sandwell HAB under the delegated authority of Engaging Communities Solutions Board who hold ultimate accountability for the delivery of the Healthwatch Sandwell contract. Paragraph 3.1.1. states the HAB should decide when to escalate issues of concern to the CQC.

Who can make relevant decision/s?

Paragraph 4.3 says:

‘Most relevant decisions will be made at HWW Advisory Board meetings in public. When it is necessary to make a decision at other times, they will be ratified at the subsequent Board meeting in public. If an urgent decision needs to be taken and the Board cannot be urgently contacted, then the Chair will make a decision on approving the decision or not. As soon as possible thereafter, the Board will be informed of the Chair’s decision and it will be recorded in the minutes of the next public HWW Board meeting.’

Background events

Case Number one

On November 27, 2020, a Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) member of staff were contacted by a resident of Swallowfield, an independent living provision of Tipton Village which is part of the Accord Housing Group. The resident was raising concerns about not being able to access a COVID-19 test. The HWS Manager advised that the Manager of Swallowfield be contacted to establish the facts regarding this concern. The Deputy Manager of Swallowfield confirmed that COVID-19 tests had arrived, and they would ensure that the resident would have access to a test.

On December 1 2020 a follow upcall was made to the resident who confirmed that they had accessed a test. However other concerns were raised by the resident along with concerns from two other residents from the same address, in regard to not following COVID-19 guidance:

- No hand gel at the entrance – all dispensers are empty and have been for some time
- Care staff are reluctant to wear masks
- A resident tested positive when he was admitted to hospital and contacted them in order for care staff (3) that he was near could self-isolate. They have continued to work.
- Visitors have not been controlled and can come as they please. One resident has 12 people over for lunch
- Public areas are not kept clean and tidy

Due to the nature of the concerns raised and in the absence of HWS Manger the staff member contacted the Chair of the Advisory Board (HAB) regarding an escalation to Public Health Sandwell. Escalation was agreed by the Chair.

The concern was raised on December 1 2020 To PH COVID -19 enquiries line. There was a response on December 2 2020 advising that the concern was referred to Adult Social Care who would advise on the next steps.

On December 8 2020 HWS Sandwell were informed by a member of Public Health Sandwell team that the matters raised were being investigated and a response to each concern was received.

Impact

- Confidence in the health care system for vulnerable residents, from the seldom heard from groups, that they are listened to and concerns taken seriously.
- HWS has a positive influence on health and social services care

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Recommendations

1. The escalation detailed in the background be retrospectively approved and recorded as such in the public minutes of the Healthwatch Sandwell Advisory Board meeting
2. That this does not need reporting to the Healthwatch Sandwell commissioning officers

Background Events

Case Number two

HWS were contacted on 14 December 2020 by the relatives of an elderly inpatient of SWBHT Sandwell Hospital site – Newton 3 ward. They were concerned that their relative had no access to a telephone to stay in contact with family members. Contact between relatives and patients during hospital stays was limited due to COVID - 19.

Due to the nature of the concern, it was decided that escalation to the relevant department/persons at SWBHT was necessary. In the absence of HWS manager the Chair of HWS HAB was informed and agreed escalation.

Details of Concern raised to Acting Chief Operating Officer and Interim Chief Nurse

- Patients own mobile phone was broken and the family have been told that the wards mobile phone, for patients use, was broken.
- Advised by member of staff that that information is accurate but if a patient can walk to Nurses station then they can use land line. Unfortunately, the patient is unable to walk.
- The member of staff also advised that this situation has been reported to Information Technology 3 times by Band 6 and 7 nurses.

HWS stated that communication with loved ones is essential at this very difficult time.

The Acting Chief Operating Officer raised the issue with the Matron of the ward who requested the details of the patient so that another mobile phone could be passed on. The patient did not wish to be identified. The patient's family have supplied another mobile phone for their use, but patient does not know how to use it, as it is new.

On December 17 HWS were made aware there is now a phone on Newton 3 to enable communication between patients and their relatives

Impact

- Confidence in the health care system for vulnerable residents, from the seldom heard from groups, that they are listened to and concerns taken seriously.
- HWS has a positive influence on health and social services care

Recommendations

1. The escalation detailed in the background be retrospectively approved and recorded as such in the public minutes of the Healthwatch Sandwell Advisory Board meeting
2. That this does not need reporting to the Healthwatch Sandwell commissioning officers

Alexia Farmer

Healthwatch Sandwell Manager