

How to write

about

Healthwatch

A brand language guide for the Healthwatch network
2017

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Introduction

We're here to listen to and understand people's experiences of health and social care. We build connections between the public, their experiences, and those with the power to make things better.

We need to speak and write in a way that helps us make this happen.

This guide is here to help us all speak in a clear and consistent way. This includes everything from our reports, website copy, news articles, press releases and marketing materials to our emails, phone calls, and meetings.

Why should I use it?

Just as with the visual side of the brand we have guidelines to ensure the look and feel of the organisation is represented consistently, this guide is here to help us all speak and write consistently about Healthwatch. This resource is designed to make life easier for anybody communicating about Healthwatch. It will:

- Save you time by providing key messages and guidance regarding language we do and do not use.
- Empower to you speak confidently about our work with various audiences.
- Help boost awareness of Healthwatch by ensuring everybody hears consistent messages about who we are and the benefits of engaging with us.

Where has this guide come from?

This guide has been developed based on evidence we have gathered about our audiences. This considers research conducted before Healthwatch was set up, as well as additional polling conducted during the last few years. Our brand language and tone of voice has been developed and tested with local Healthwatch to ensure that it reflects each organisation's experience of communicating as a brand.

Our tone of voice

Our tone of voice is the personality we project as a brand. It comes through in our written and verbal communications, just as a person's personality is expressed in this way. Our tone brings our values to life and helps us represent the type of organisation we want to be.

The following principles are designed to help you represent Healthwatch appropriately. We explain both what we are and what we're not to help you establish the right tone and language to use in any given situation.

We are:

<p>Friendly but not informal</p>	<p>We want people to feel that they can approach us and talk to us, but to understand that we are a professional organisation. We</p>
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	should therefore use plain, simple language, but not be insincere.
Compassionate but not emotional	We discuss the often difficult experiences people share with us in a delicate way, but we do not apply judgement. We don't describe people's experiences as 'awful', 'sad' or 'horrendous', we let the stories speak for themselves.
Authoritative but not cold	Everything we say is rooted in evidence, and we do so in a human, accessible way. We should speak confidently about our evidence and state where it comes from, but we mustn't be too academic, as we're always talking about real people's experiences.
Informed but not superior	Everything we share is rooted in evidence, but we don't think we know everything or that we are the only ones who speak to the public. We should share what we know, but not ignore other evidence or viewpoints.
Helpful but not heavy-handed	We are here to help people get the support they need. We should guide people to useful information, but we can't tell them what to do.

How to use the tone of voice

Tone of voice	Do	Don't
Friendly but not informal	Use accessible, clear language and short sentences.	Use jargon. Use vague language. Talk in long sentences. Use text speak or slang.
Compassionate but not emotional	Talk about real people's experiences. Use people's names (where possible).	Apply judgements to people's stories. Describe them using words such as 'amazing' 'awful' or 'horrendous' etc.
Authoritative but not cold	Speak confidently about what you have heard. Be clear about where your evidence has come from.	Be too academic or lose sight of the people at the heart of the story.
Informed but not superior	Share information/evidence.	Ignore other evidence or points of view.
Helpful but not heavy handed	Guide people to information. Suggest actions people could take.	Tell people what to do.

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How to describe who we are and what we do

What is Healthwatch?

Here are some simple messages to help you explain the Healthwatch network, Healthwatch England, and local Healthwatch. These are written for a general public audience. Below you can find guidance on what to highlight with more specific audiences.

We are Healthwatch

Use this description when talking about Healthwatch or the network in general.

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to make sure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

We have the power to make sure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary - Healthwatch is here to:

- help people find out about local care
- listen to what people think of services
- help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care
- encourage people running services to involve people in changes to care

We are Healthwatch England

Use this description when describing the role of the national organisation.

We are the independent national champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services, and the government, put people at the heart of care.

We support local Healthwatch to find out what people want and to advocate for services that meet local communities' needs. Healthwatch around the country act as our eyes and ears on the ground, letting us know how people's care could be improved.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people. We have the power to make sure their voices are heard.

In summary - Healthwatch England is here to:

- help local Healthwatch do their job - to listen to people, and to make people's views of services heard
- help improve the quality of services by letting the government and those running services know what people want from care
- encourage people running services to involve people in changes to care

We are local Healthwatch

Use this description when describing the role of local Healthwatch.

There is a local Healthwatch in every area of England. We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also share them with Healthwatch England, the national body, to help improve the quality of services across the country. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary - Local Healthwatch is here to:

- help people find out about local health and social care services
- listen to what people think of services
- help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care
- encourage people running services to involve people in changes to care

Frequently asked questions about Healthwatch

To help with the next stage of conversations beyond what our organisations are for, here are some responses to typical questions about our work.

What do we stand for?

Health and social care works best when people are involved in decisions about their treatment and care. But this doesn't always happen. We are here to help make sure that those designing, running and regulating health and social care listen to people's views and act on them.

How do we do it?

People speak to Healthwatch about the issues that matter most to them. Local Healthwatch share these experiences with local services so that they can be improved. They also share them with Healthwatch England, the national body, which identifies common issues affecting people across the country, and informs those with the power to make change happen.

How do I benefit from what Healthwatch does?

- You can speak to us about what you think of local services - good or bad.
- We are interested in everybody's views, from all parts of the community.
- Where possible, we will let you know when changes are planned to services in your area and help you have a say.
- You can speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Why should I get involved?

Speak to local Healthwatch about your experiences of any NHS or social care service, and help make them better for you, your friends and family. It's quick and easy to get in touch - you can

phone, email, chat online, or meet us in person. Just a few moments of your time could make a big difference.

Healthwatch style guide

Below is a series of further guidance to help you when writing about or as Healthwatch.

General guidance

Use active language, not passive

- Say: Tom kicked the ball. Don't say: The ball was kicked by Tom
- Say: 2,000 people came to the event. Don't say: The event was attended by 2,000 people

No matter who you're writing for, be as clear as possible

- Don't use a long word when a short word will do: Say 'use', don't say 'utilised'. Say 'try', don't say 'attempt'.
- Use language that most people will understand.

Be specific

- Say 'We're going to talk to people about what they think of their GP.' Don't say 'We're going to hold discussions around people's views of primary care'.

Be personable

- Say 'we' and 'us' rather than 'Healthwatch'.

Always put people first

- Say 'People told us that...'
- Say 'Thanks to all the people who shared their views, X has changed.'

Style guide A-Z

Abbreviations

Should be avoided. Don't assume people know what you mean.

Acronyms

Should be written out in full in the first instance and then referred to only by the acronym afterwards. If the term is only mentioned once in a document, it should be written out in full with no mention of the acronym included.

Ampersands

Should be avoided except in recognised cases, such as A&E. Otherwise 'and' should be used in full.

Dates

Should be written as: Friday 11 March 2016. We don't say 11th, 22nd, 23rd etc. We don't use commas within dates.

Enter and View

Enter and View is the official name given to the powers Healthwatch have to visit formally local health and social care settings. As this is not a widely recognised term, it should only be used amongst audiences who are familiar with it (i.e. other local Healthwatch or those with whom Enter and View visits have been conducted). For others and in any public facing communications, use more accessible language, such as ‘we carried out a visit to a local care home/GP surgery’ etc. Enter and View should never be used as a verb.

Healthwatch England/local Healthwatch:

When we are talking about ourselves, say ‘we’ ‘us’ and ‘our’, rather than speaking about ourselves in the third person.

If using our name, write it in full. Do not use acronyms such as HWE or LHW.

‘local’ before ‘Healthwatch’ should only start with a capital letter if at the beginning of a sentence or the start of a title. Otherwise it should be: local Healthwatch or simply: Healthwatch.

When speaking about a particular local Healthwatch, say, for example: Healthwatch Bradford - not, local Healthwatch Bradford.

When speaking about more than one local Healthwatch, say:

One local Healthwatch

Two/three/four local Healthwatch

Do not say: ‘Healthwatches’

Job titles

Should be capitalised. For example:

Jane Mordue, Chair of Healthwatch England

We are hiring a new Communications Officer.

People/patients

When speaking about experiences your community has shared, say ‘People told us’ or ‘We heard from 500 people’. We no longer say ‘consumer’.

When speaking about somebody having a GP appointment or who is in hospital, you can also say ‘patient’.

Speaking about people with specific conditions

As a general rule, we put people first and speak about their condition as something they have, not something they ‘are’. For example, say ‘People with a disability’ rather than disabled people. We also do not describe people as ‘suffering from’ a condition but ‘living with’ a condition. For example, we say ‘people living with dementia’ not ‘people suffering from dementia’.

Types of care

As much as possible, refer to the specific service you are talking about, e.g. don't say ‘primary care’, say ‘doctors’, ‘pharmacists’ or ‘dentists’. Don't say ‘secondary care’, say ‘hospital’ or ‘clinic’.

How to avoid jargon

It is vital that we speak clearly and do not alienate people with jargon. Here are some suggestions to help you avoid using it.

Instead of saying	Say
Impactful	Effective
Feeding into	Contributing to
Going forward	From now on
In the round	Generally, overall
Take this offline	Discuss this later/elsewhere
Across the piste	In general, across the board
Co-production	Working together
Co-design	Design, design/develop together
Blue sky thinking	Coming up with ideas, creativity
To action	To do, address
Joined-up thinking	Working together
Synergy	Work well together
Slide pack	Presentation
Health and social care system	Health and social care services
Pre-meeting/pre-reading	Meeting/reading
Cascading	Sharing
Upskill	Train, teach
Value-add	Add value, improve
Leverage	Use, make the most of
Rich conversations	Be more specific - useful discussion, lots of new ideas etc.
Touch base	Meet, discuss, give an update
Granularity	Detail
Land (e.g. How do we think this is going to land with the Minister?)	Be received by, what will he/she think?
Land (e.g. When do we think this report will land?)	Be published/launched/finished/done
Reach out	Contact, talk to
Road map	Plan, timeline
Seldom heard groups	We listen to the views of people from all areas of the community
Leading on (e.g. Who is leading on this project?)	Leading, running, in charge of

Putting it all into practice

How to use this guide to improve your copy

Below are some examples of how the guidance in this document can help improve existing copy and avoid common mistakes.

Website homepage text

Before:

Welcome to your local Healthwatch.

Find information; sign up to receive regular news and updates; and use the Speak Out form to leave comments about services. See what we're working on and our current priorities here. Together, we are making a difference!

After:

We're your local Healthwatch. We're here to help make health and social care better for people in (local area). Got a couple of minutes to tell us what you think of local services? Fill in our quick survey. You can find out what other people have been saying here ([link](#)).

Before:

Healthwatch is your consumer champion for health and social care. We listen to the views of adults and children and influence the way services are planned and delivered on your behalf.

After:

We are your champion for health and social care. We are here to listen to what you want, and to share your views with those running services to help make them better.

Annual report website text

Before:

Healthwatch XX Annual Report 2018/19

Our annual report is now available. See how Healthwatch XX has positively impacted on Health Services in the XX area, ensuring that your voice is always heard.

After:

How your views helped improve health and care in (area) this year

Find out how we used the stories and opinions you shared with us to help make care better for our local community. Download our annual report.

News article introductory paragraph

Before

On Wednesday 29 March, Healthwatch XX attended a meeting to discuss proposed changes to primary care services in (city) to improve care for people with learning disabilities.

After

Staff in all GP surgeries across (city) will now be trained in how to communicate with people with learning disabilities. Thanks to the 1,000 people who shared their views with us, the training will help make everybody's experience of going to the doctor easier.

Website text to promote a survey

Before:

GP accessibility survey

Please help Healthwatch X by completing our short survey.

After:

How easy do you find it to get appointments with your doctor?

Complete our short survey and we'll let them know how you'd like them to improve.

What to focus on for specific audiences

Each audience you speak to will be interested in particular elements of our work. Here are some suggestions for things to highlight and things you might want to avoid saying when speaking to each audience.

The general public

What appeals to them about Healthwatch?

- Being listened to and valued
- Being included in decision making
- Contributing to change
- Access to information about services
- Services being good/better

What should you emphasise?

- The impact they can make
- The value of people's input, and that every comment matters
- That Healthwatch is here to support them
- That we can't make a difference without them
- That it's confidential and that speaking up will not have a negative impact on their care

What should you avoid?

- Jargon
- Assumptions (about what matters to people regarding health and care or what they know about health and social care)
- Judgements (i.e. keep it neutral, let people express their views)

Health and social care professionals

What appeals to them about Healthwatch?

- The potential for information we share to inform improvements
- People being guided to them/the correct service by us
- The feedback we collect
- That we can help services better understand each other

What should you emphasise?

- The positive difference feedback can make
- Evidence
- How other services have benefited from people's feedback

What would you avoid?

- Any suggestion that you're telling them what to do
- Negative language (i.e. focus on the positive impact feedback can make)

Politicians

What appeals to them about Healthwatch?

- Insights collected from their constituents
- Anything that assists with their campaigns
- Our common interest in what local people want
- That we are independent and don't have an agenda

What should you emphasise?

- Statistics and evidence, particularly demonstrating that they are representative of the whole community
- What matters to people
- Our connection to their work

What should you avoid?

- Assumptions (i.e. that they know who we are and what we do)
- Jargon
- Anything that is not relevant to their exact constituency/role