NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS IN WALES

April 2016
# Document Management

## DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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<tr>
<th>File Name</th>
<th>NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CHCs</th>
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<tr>
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## REVISION HISTORY

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<tr>
<th>Version</th>
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<td>15</td>
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Introduction

Community Health Councils (CHCs) have an important job to do in representing independently and without bias the interests of patients and the public in the way National Health Services are planned and provided in Wales. There are seven local CHCs in Wales, each one covering a distinct geographical area of Wales, aligned with the seven Local Health Boards which are responsible for the design and delivery of NHS services for that area.

CHCs are made up of volunteer members who live in the communities they serve, supported locally by small teams of staff. Wherever you live in Wales, you can expect your local CHC to work tirelessly on your behalf so that the views and experiences of people who live in your local community are represented locally and nationally to influence and improve NHS services for everyone.

So that you know what you can expect from your local CHC, and can be sure that the activities carried out in your interests are of a high quality, the Board of Community Health Councils in Wales “the CHC Board” provides advice, guidance and support to local CHCs across the range of their activities, and is responsible for monitoring and managing the performance of local CHCs in carrying out their activities.
The purpose of national standards

The CHC Board has, for the first time, established a set of national standards for the work of CHCs in Wales. These national standards are designed to establish a clear picture of how the activities of a good CHC should look and feel in practice, from the perspective of patients and the public.

The national standards provide the foundation upon which local CHCs should plan, deliver, monitor and report upon their activities. Doing so in this way means that local CHCs can more clearly demonstrate how well they meet the needs and interests of their local communities in the conduct of their activities.

The CHC Board will actively monitor and manage the performance of local CHCs, using the national standards as its benchmark.

The national standards do not define what priorities and activities your local CHC should carry out on your behalf – that is a matter for your local CHC to decide – by listening to you (and those who represent you) about the things that matter most in your local communities about the NHS. However, they help to ensure that the basis upon which local CHCs take their decisions is a good one.

Nor do the national standards themselves provide detailed guidance, standardised procedures, instructions or documentation that set out exactly how local CHC’s should carry out their activities. However, they provide a clear basis from which CHCs can work together with the CHC Board to review, strengthen and further develop guidance, procedures, instructions and documentation that help CHCs work in a consistent way.
Meeting the national standards

The national standards apply equally to the four main functions of CHCs. These can be described as:

- enabling users of the NHS to raise concerns about the services they receive through an Independent Advocacy Service
- systematically visiting, monitoring and scrutinising local health services
- continuously engaging with the communities they represent and the health service providers serving those communities
- representing the interests of patients and the public in the planning and agreement of NHS service changes.

For each of the four main functions of CHCs, the national standards are underpinned by a set of indicators. These are not meant to be exhaustive. Local CHCs can use the indicators to help them demonstrate that they are meeting the national standards. Where a local CHC is not yet able to demonstrate achievement of a standard, the indicators can also help identify what further action may be needed.
How you can get involved

We want to hear your views on the national standards. Your feedback will inform the CHC Board’s first review of the standards in 2017-2018. This review will take into account the impact of the national standards in the first year of their introduction, reflecting your experiences. You can contact your local CHC or the CHC Board.

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg CHC
1st Floor, Cimla Hospital
Cimla, Neath
SA11 3SU
01639 683490

Aneurin Bevan CHC
Raglan House, Llantarnam Business Park
Cwmbran
NP23 5LW
01633 838516

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan CHC
Park House
Greyfriars Road
Cardiff
CF10 3AF
02920 377407

Cwm Taf CHC
Unit 10 Maritime Offices
Woodland Terrace
Maes-y-Coed, Pontypridd
CF37 1DZ
01443 405830

Hywel Dda CHC
Suite 1, Cedar Court
Havens Head Business Park
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA73 3LS
01646 697610

North Wales CHC
Unit 11 Chestnut Court
Ffordd y Parc, Parc Menai
Bangor
LL57 4FH
01248 679284

Powys CHC
Neuadd Brycheiniog
Cambrian Way
Brecon
LD3 7HR
01874 624206

Board of Community Health Councils in Wales
3rd Floor
33-35 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9HB
02920 235558
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<th>STANDARD 1</th>
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<td>STANDARD 3</td>
<td>CHC activities and services meet the needs of and are accessible to all</td>
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<td>STANDARD 4</td>
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<td>STANDARD 5</td>
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<td>STANDARD 6</td>
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<td>STANDARD 7</td>
<td>CHCs strengthen the voice of patients and the public by working together and with others.</td>
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Our Independent Advocacy Service

Advocacy is about helping people to be heard. The independent advocacy service provided by CHCs is there to help and support people to ensure that their experiences and concerns are not only listened to but are acted upon. The independent advocacy service offers confidential support, advice and guidance for people who want to raise a concern about any NHS provider. CHC advocates aim to:

- Enable patients, carers and relatives to access information about their concerns and to offer advice on the options available.
- Support patients to put forward their concerns and complaints to the NHS for investigation.

The independent advocacy service is provided in a friendly, confidential and supportive manner, encouraging the NHS to learn from individual patient experience to improve the service overall.

How the standards apply to our Independent Advocacy Service

**STANDARD 1 - CHCs act in the interests of the public and patients in Wales**

**What this means in practice:**

- Our advocacy service is designed to make a difference for individual complainants as well as drive improvement in NHS services overall
- Patients and the public understand and value the role of our advocacy service
STANDARD 2 - CHCs work effectively with others to safeguard and promote the welfare of people who use NHS services

What this means in practice:

- Our advocates identify complainants in vulnerable situations and respond appropriately
- Our advocates recognise early warning signs of service failure and respond appropriately
- Our advocates maintain the confidentiality of complainants and only disclose information with express consent unless there is immediate risk of harm.
- The service provided by our advocates is dignified, respectful and sensitive.

STANDARD 3 - CHC activities and services meet the needs of patients and the public and are accessible to all.

What this means in practice:

- Our advocacy service is free and easy to use by everyone who wants support in making a complaint.
- Our advocates deliver an equitable service that actively identifies and meets individual needs
- Our advocates respect the diversity of those who use our service.
- Complainants are aware of and know how to access the advocacy service
- Our advocates stay alongside complainants until the complaint is resolved.
- We engage with patients and the public using their chosen method of communication

STANDARD 4 - CHC activities are open, transparent and inclusive

What this means in practice:

- Complainants are clear about what they can expect from the advocacy service and what it can and cannot do.
- Our advocates promote individual empowerment
- We use plain language so that our communications are clear, understandable and free from jargon

STANDARD 5 - CHC activities are properly led, resourced and supported

What this means in practice:

- Our advocates are confident and competent through effective training and supervision
- Our advocates have access to suitable materials and resources to support effective advocacy practice
<table>
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<tr>
<th>STANDARD 6</th>
<th>CHCs plan and carry out their activities in a way that maintains their independence and demonstrates their accountability to the communities they serve</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means in practice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our advocates provide a service that is on the side of the complainant.</td>
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<td>- Our advocates work solely on behalf of complainants.</td>
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<td>- Our advocacy service delivers on its promises and helps complainants achieve their goals.</td>
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<td>- Our advocates are not compromised by conflicts of interest that may prevent them from acting on behalf of complainants.</td>
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<td>- Our advocacy service publishes regular reports on its performance.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 7</th>
<th>CHCs strengthen the voice of patients and the public by working together and with others.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means in practice:</strong></td>
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<td>- Partner organisations and the NHS are aware of and actively promote our advocacy service.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means in practice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our advocates are led by the views and wishes of complainants and only act on their instruction.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 9</th>
<th>CHCs share and report upon the results of their activities in a balanced and timely way.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means in practice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our advocates keep in touch with complainants and report progress in accordance with complainants’ wishes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our advocacy service identifies monitors and reports on issues and trends arising from its work.</td>
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STANDARD 10 - CHCs evaluate the impact of their actions and apply the learning to future activities

What this means in practice:

- We evaluate the overall effectiveness of our advocacy service
- We use the results of our evaluation to develop our advocacy service
- We share lessons with others

Scrutiny

CHCs have a responsibility to systematically scrutinise the NHS. They do this in a variety of ways including examining information about NHS services and asking questions of NHS leaders. CHC scrutiny activity includes undertaking a programme of visits to NHS services to see how health care is being delivered and to ask patients, family and carers about their experience.

It is important that scrutiny activity is designed to make a difference on the things that matter most. It is important that CHCs let you know what they are doing in your interests and how their activities have made a difference.
# How the standards apply to our Scrutiny activities

## STANDARD 1 - CHCs act in the interests of the public and patients in Wales

What this means in practice:

- Our scrutiny activities are designed to make a difference and drive improvement in NHS services
- Our scrutiny and monitoring activities are balanced, proportionate and focus on the things that matter most to patients and the public
- Patients and the public understand and value our visiting, scrutiny and monitoring activities

## STANDARD 2 - CHCs work effectively with others to safeguard and promote the welfare of people who use NHS services

What this means in practice:

- We respond appropriately to early signs of service failure.
- We act quickly when we identify those in vulnerable situations.
- We maintain the confidentiality of patients and the public unless there is immediate risk of harm.
- We undertake our visiting monitoring and scrutiny activities with sensitivity; respecting the dignity and wishes of patients and carers.

## STANDARD 3 - CHC activities and services meet the needs of and are accessible to all.

What this means in practice:

- Our visiting activity captures the views and experiences of the wide range of patients and carers who use NHS services
- Our visiting, monitoring and scrutiny activities extend beyond geographical boundaries to meet the needs of those receiving services out of area.
- We engage with patients and the public using their chosen method of communication.
# NATIONAL STANDARDS
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS IN WALES

## STANDARD 4 - CHC activities are open, transparent and inclusive

**What this means in practice:**

- We proactively seek the views and experiences of less frequently heard groups
- We use plain language so that our communications are clear, understandable and free from jargon
- Our communications are accessible and available in a variety of formats.

## STANDARD 5 - CHC activities are properly led, resourced and supported

**What this means in practice:**

- Our members and staff are confident and competent through effective training
- Our members and staff have access to suitable materials and resources to support effective visiting, scrutiny and monitoring activity.

## STANDARD 6 - CHCs plan and carry out their activities in a way that maintains their independence and demonstrates their accountability to the communities they serve

**What this means in practice:**

- Our challenge of the NHS is constructive, robust and purposeful
- We seek the views of the public and patients in deciding our priorities and planning our activities.
- We publish our plans
- We hold our committee meetings in public.
- We publish details of our activities, findings and the outcomes we achieve.
**STANDARD 7 - CHCs strengthen the voice of patients and the public by working together and with others.**

What this means in practice:

- We collaborate on issues and services that span NHS boundaries
- We plan our activities with others
- We, routinely, seek and respond to information from others about NHS services in the communities we serve
- We recognise where others are better placed to act on information about NHS services and refer appropriately
- We work with other organisations whenever it is in the best interest of patients and the public

**STANDARD 8 - CHCs reflect the views and experiences of patients and the public about NHS services**

What this means in practice:

- We reflect without bias the range of views and experiences shared by patients and the public.
- We agree a position or make recommendations based on sound evidence from a range of sources.

**STANDARD 9 - CHCs share and report upon the results of their activities in a balanced and timely way.**

What this means in practice:

- We provide timely feedback to NHS service providers and other organisations about our findings and recommendations.
- Our reports are clear, unambiguous and informative; highlighting what works well and identifying where improvements are needed.
- We publicise the outcomes and impact of our visiting, scrutiny and monitoring activities
- Our reports are accurate and supported by evidence.
STANDARD 10 - CHCs evaluate the impact of their actions and apply the learning to future activities

What this means in practice:

- We evaluate the overall effectiveness of our approach to visiting, scrutiny and monitoring activities
- We use the results of our evaluation to develop our approach to visiting, scrutiny and monitoring
- We share lessons with others

Continuous Engagement

In order to properly represent your views, CHCs in Wales need to routinely and regularly engage with you directly, through community groups and third sector organisations and jointly with the NHS to find out what you think about NHS services.

CHCs also have a responsibility to monitor and scrutinise how well the NHS engages with you directly in the design and development of health services. CHCs therefore need to strike the right balance between their own engagement activities and their influence on the engagement approach and activities of the NHS.

It is also important that CHCs let you know what they are doing in your interests and how the activities they carry out on your behalf influence the decisions and actions of the NHS locally and nationally.
### How the standards apply to our continuous engagement activities

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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means in practice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our engagement activities provide a real chance for the public to influence healthcare policy, design and delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our continuous engagement activities are designed to make a difference and drive improvement in NHS services</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our continuous engagement activities are balanced, proportionate and designed to identify the things that matter most to patients and the public</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Patients and the public understand and value the part we play in continuous engagement about NHS services</td>
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<tr>
<th>STANDARD 2 - CHCs work effectively with others to safeguard and promote the welfare of people who use NHS services</th>
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<td><strong>What this means in practice:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our engagement activities provide an opportunity for the public to voice concerns regarding the planning and delivery of NHS services</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Through our engagement activities we identify potential issues and trends at an early stage and take appropriate action</td>
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### STANDARD 3 - CHC activities and services meet the needs of and are accessible to all.

What this means in practice:

- We offer a range and variety of opportunities and methods to encourage participation
- We identify and overcome barriers to participation
- Our engagement activities are well promoted and visible
- We make it easy for people to participate using a variety of methods to suit individual needs and preferences
- We promote participation in peoples chosen language
- Our communications are accessible and available in a variety of formats.

### STANDARD 4 - CHC activities are open, transparent and inclusive

What this means in practice:

- We proactively seek the views of less frequently heard groups
- We use plain language so that our communications are clear, understandable and free from jargon

### STANDARD 5 - CHC activities are properly led, resourced and supported

What this means in practice:

- Our members and staff are confident and competent through effective training
- Our members and staff have access to suitable materials and resources to support effective engagement
### STANDARD 6 - CHCs plan and carry out their activities in a way that maintains their independence and demonstrates their accountability to the communities they serve

What this means in practice:

- We seek the views of the public and patients in deciding our priorities and planning our activities.
- We publish our plans.
- We hold our committee meetings in public.
- We publish details of our activities, findings and the outcomes we achieve.

### STANDARD 7 - CHCs strengthen the voice of patients and the public by working together and with others.

What this means in practice:

- We communicate and work with other organisations whenever it is in the best interest of patients and the public.
- We work with partners to increase our scope, reach and impact.
- We work within a framework of continuous public engagement that allows for plans and reports to be shared with others.

### STANDARD 8 - CHCs reflect the views and experiences of patients and the public about NHS services

What this means in practice:

- We reflect without bias the range of views and experiences shared by patients and the public.
STANDARD 9 - CHCs share and report upon the results of their activities in a balanced and timely way.

What this means in practice:

- We provide timely feedback to participants about views expressed and the decisions or actions taken as a result.
- We publicise the outcomes and impact of our continuous public engagement activities.
- Reports of our engagement activities are accurate and supported by evidence.

STANDARD 10 - CHCs evaluate the impact of their actions and apply the learning to future activities.

What this means in practice:

- We regularly monitor and evaluate the overall effectiveness of our continuous engagement activity.
- We use the results of our evaluation to develop our approach to engagement.
- We share lessons with others.

Service Change

In order that local health services meet the existing and future needs of their population and communities, it is essential that they are planned, designed and developed together with local people, from the start. CHC’s have a specific responsibility to engage with the NHS whenever service change is proposed; representing the interests of public and patients and ensuring that NHS organisations engage or consult as appropriate with those affected.
# How the standards apply to our role in service changes

## STANDARD 1 - CHCs act in the interests of the public and patients in Wales

**What this means in practice:**

- Patients and the public understand and value our role in NHS service changes
- Our approach to the consideration of service changes is balanced, proportionate and focuses on the things that matter most to patients and the public
- Our decisions take account of the need to ensure safe, sustainable services within the context of the priorities and resources available to the NHS
- We will only take a decision to refer a service change onwards when we can demonstrate we have taken all reasonable actions

## STANDARD 2 - CHCs work effectively with others to safeguard and promote the welfare of people who use NHS services

**What this means in practice:**

- We assess the benefits and risks to the community as a whole as well as particular groups

## STANDARD 3 - CHC activities and services meet the needs of and are accessible to all.

**What this means in practice:**

- We take a strategic, NHS wide view of change proposals

## STANDARD 4 - CHC activities are open, transparent and inclusive

**What this means in practice:**

- We take full account of the likely impact of service changes on individuals, particular groups and whole communities
- We seek the widest catchment of views and foster constructive debate
- We give full consideration to the breadth of views expressed by individuals, particular groups and whole communities
**STANDARD 5 - CHC activities are properly led, resourced and supported**

What this means in practice:

- Our members and staff are confident and competent through effective training
- Our members and staff have access to suitable information and resources to support effective decision making

**STANDARD 6 - CHCs plan and carry out their activities in a way that maintains their independence and demonstrates their accountability to the communities they serve**

What this means in practice:

- Our members are not compromised by conflict of interest that may prevent them from acting on behalf of affected communities
- Our members consider the evidence relating to service change in public
- Our members are free to act according to the evidence

**STANDARD 7 - CHCs strengthen the voice of patients and the public by working together and with others.**

What this means in practice:

- We work with NHS services so that people are fully informed about proposed changes at the earliest opportunity
- We work constructively to inform the design and development of NHS services

**STANDARD 8 - CHCs reflect the views and experiences of patients and the public about NHS services**

What this means in practice:

- We advocate for service change and improvement in response to the views and experiences of patients and the public
### STANDARD 9 - CHCs share and report upon the results of their activities in a balanced and timely way.

**What this means in practice:**

- We take our decisions in public
- We communicate our decisions widely
- We set out clearly and objectively the basis for our decisions

### STANDARD 10 - CHCs evaluate the impact of their actions and apply the learning to future activities

**What this means in practice:**

- We evaluate the overall effectiveness of our involvement in service changes
- We use the results of our evaluation to develop our involvement in service changes
- We share lessons with others