

## Healthwatch Birmingham's response to Birmingham City Council's Consultation – Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham Green Paper

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Birmingham City Council's consultation on the '*Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham Green Paper*'. Healthwatch Birmingham's key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers (PPSuC) are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- The involvement of patients, the public, service users (PPSuCs) in developing the proposed strategy.
- Whether the proposed strategy is responsive to the needs of Birmingham residents.

We welcome that Birmingham City Council is developing a strategy that will ensure that Birmingham residents have a shared vision of fairness and greater social integration. In addition, that the Council recognises the importance of breaking down barriers to social and economic inequality. From our experience of working in health and social care, we have learnt that people's circumstances (for instance, economic and social backgrounds) affect how they access services leading to differences in outcomes and inequality. We believe that this is important, especially for Birmingham whose population is so diverse in terms of age, ethnicity and culture. The 2011 census recorded that Birmingham residents had over 91 different languages as their first or preferred language. According to the 2010 indices of multiple deprivation 56% of Birmingham's population fall into the most deprived quintile.

We therefore agree generally with the proposed guiding principles and the outlined plans in ensuring that these principles are met. In particular, we welcome the idea of dialogue, co-design and co-production with local communities and other stakeholders. We hope to see in the final strategy a plan of how this will look in practice, especially in ensuring that the diversity of Birmingham is captured in these activities and how their views will impact plans.

Taking the above into consideration and the council's recognition of the diversity of Birmingham, we are concerned that this consultation does not seem to be designed in such a way that it is accessible to many. We note that the only way to respond to this consultation is through email. There is no indication that other means of commenting, such as through the post, are available nor have hard copies been made available. This has the potential to exclude some groups from contributing to the consultation. In addition, the strategy document is not offered in any other format or language. Considering the diversity of Birmingham city and differences in the level and pattern of deprivation, it is important that when consulting, all people are given the same rights to contribute and have access to the means to enable them to contribute. This ensures that the needs of the community affected by the proposals in this strategy are taken into consideration and resources are distributed fairly across the city. We believe that, the current process for involving the public



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has failed to address this, hence the needs of some groups will not be present in the final strategy. In order for the cohesion strategy to be effective and meet its goals, the Council has to understand the needs of different groups. Healthwatch Birmingham would like to see an emphasis on using service user insight, experience and involvement to ensure that this strategy is shaped by the needs of relevant populations and communities.

Yours Sincerely,



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Policy Officer



Andy Cave

Chief Executive Officer



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