

## Office relocation: Update

In August 2021 the Board received an 'Office relocation: Plan and Implication' paper. This paper made recommendations for Board agreement on various aspects and implications of the Healthwatch Hertfordshire office move. All recommendations put forward within that paper were agreed and over the past six months the Executive Team have been putting these plans in place.

This paper provides an update on the various aspects of the office move now that Healthwatch Hertfordshire has officially relocated to:

Kings Court  
London Road  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
SG1 2NG

### 1. Premises

At its meeting in August, Board agreed the approach put forward for office accommodation. On 6<sup>th</sup> November Geoff shared a paper outlining the premises visited and assessed. This paper put forward a two desk office within Kings Court in Stevenage as our preferred option. A two desk office allows for flexibility in terms of configuration to allow more than two people to work in the space collaboratively. Work spaces outside the office allow further options for collaboration/meeting. An additional facility is private space (booths) for phone calls or zoom meetings.

We have since signed a one year contract with Kings Court starting from 1<sup>st</sup> January. We have updated the organisation's records with the Charity Commission and Companies House. A letter has been sent to all partners and service providers communicating the change of address.

Throughout February the Executive Team will be visiting the office and will be given a tour, a run through of housekeeping and an office health and safety induction.

### 2. Server and SharePoint

On 26<sup>th</sup> November, as recommended by Dudley Todd, IT (Herts) Ltd. and agreed by Board, Healthwatch Hertfordshire moved over to Microsoft SharePoint, a platform which is cloud-based and included with our MS 365 subscription. SharePoint is a file repository which allows users to store and share files for access from any location. This move has meant we could remove the need to relocate the bulky and outdated server to the smaller office premises.

Urbaser Ltd, a commercial waste company recommended to us by the Council has collected the server and disposed of this ethically and in compliance with GDPR.

### 3. Digitalisation of paper records

The move to more home-based working has meant an increasing reliance on accessing information digitally. Adhering to GDPR, retention periods and best practice, over the past six months we have significantly reduced the amount of paper held, scanned essential documents and paperwork into digital versions whilst ensuring that confidential and personal documentation is kept safe and secure. Additionally, the digitalisation of documentation moves the organisation towards more sustainable practices.

#### **4. Telephony**

Working with our telephone provider over the past couple of months we have now moved over to cloud-based telephony enabling us to receive and make calls via a portal from our laptops. At present this has been set up for members of staff who deliver our signposting service. We will assess if having access to 'softphones' would be beneficial for the rest of the team also.

#### **5. Equipment, furniture and Storage**

Through the years, we have evolved as an organisation and no longer expect to need the large store of equipment materials which is held in an offsite storage facility. We have also accumulated furniture, resources and an archive which is also stored there. With this in mind we have re-evaluated what is held in the offsite storage and minimised this. We will now be evaluating how we might remove the need for, or to downsize to a smaller storage unit.

Whilst evaluating the storage unit contents and downsizing the furniture held at the office in Silver Court, we were able to donate excess furniture and equipment to other charities, organisations and families in need. A mix of tables, chairs, pedestals and room dividers were donated to a local school, AgeUK, a newly established domiciliary care service and local families. In addition, old laptops and resources for children were donated to Broxbourne CVS for families in need.

As mentioned previously AgeUK are also moving and will need to ensure the offices are redecorated and furnished to the same standard as when they took out the tenancy. As part of this we will be invoiced a small proportion, pro rata, for re-carpeting and decoration of the room we sublet from them. This will be received by the new financial year.