Contract Monitoring Projects & Activity Qtr 3 (October – December 2025)

1. Projects & Activities Overview

Research & Engagement

Research%20and%20 Engagement%20Prog

Exploring Connected Lives in 3 Residential Care Homes

A targeted project supporting the Hertfordshire Strategic Quality Improvement Group (SQIG) with their work plan to hear the voices of residents and to enable practical improvements where applicable. In the process of visiting three care homes.

Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE)

We were invited by both The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust and East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust to participate in their annual PLACE audits. At both trusts, patient voice led the feedback and staff felt confident in voicing their opinions of the environment. We also noted good practice in the promotion of Martha's Rule (Call for Concern) on wards which aims to empower all staff, patients and their families to seek an independent medical review if they feel their concerns about a patient's care are not being adequately addressed. Results of the audits will be published towards the end of February 2026.

Communications

- Media enquiries:
  - Heart Radio re resident doctor strikes
- Comms and social media to launch projects and findings from:
  - Integrated Care Partnership survey report
  - Drugs/alcohol and mental health report
  - Quality accounts report
  - Stop smoking report
  - Pharmacy engagement project
  - drugs/alcohol/mental health project
  - stop smoking project
- Created and published December newsletter including finding and setting up new print and electronic newsletter providers
- Supporting local charities, Healthwatch England initiatives, local Councils and NHS/social care organisations via social media
- Series of 'year in review' videos and social media campaigns; e.g. blood pressure checks, cervical cancer screening, and access to GP Services.

Website Articles:

- Major Hertfordshire survey reveals critical gaps in local health and care services
- A call for joined-up care: Substance use should not be a barrier to mental health help
- Our Impact: Translating health data into what matters for local people

- We identified what helps people stop smoking and why some are reluctant to get help
- What should I do if I'm unwell or need help over the festive period?

Other

Volunteering: Two of our Trustees reached their maximum term of 9 years on the Board during the quarter, and have now stepped down. We thanked them for their significant contributions and excellent service to the organisation throughout their time on the Board.

2. Holding commissioners and providers to account and partnership working

This section explains our role in championing our communities at a strategic level, then listing meetings with commissioners, providers and partners and summarising key themes covered.

Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System (ICS) and the Central East Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Activity has included:

- Six-weekly meetings with the Nursing and Quality Team across the Integrated Care System to raise issues from signposting and research. These meetings have proved an excellent way for us to raise concerns and the ICS have been very responsive in taking action to address these. Examples have included changes to the GP contract regarding digital access, adoption of the updated Accessible Information Standard, and clarity on interpreting services in primary care.
- Meeting with the Chair of the Central East ICB, about the work in progress to transition from current to future arrangements, and the upcoming legislative changes for Healthwatch.
- Regular attendance at the System Transformation and Quality Improvement Committee
- Representation at the ICS/ICB's system meetings, although a number of them have recently been stood down
    - Communications Group
    - Participation Community of Practice
    - Patient Engagement Forum (PEF)

Hertfordshire and West Essex System Quality Group (SQG)

Regular attendance at meetings of the group. As part of the spotlight/showcasing best practice meeting in October, we presented on our 'Lost in the System – health and care barriers of refugees and asylum seekers in Hertfordshire'. This resulted in a good discussion about what other providers, the ICB and HCC are doing to support refugees and asylum seekers and the challenges and complexity providers face in meeting the needs of this population. Members were encouraged to share the findings and recommendations more widely in their organisations.

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Quality Improvement Group

(re care homes, Supported Living and Support at home services including permanent, enablement, and short break services).

Regular attendance at meetings of the group; this quarter the topics explored the findings of a new Safeguarding Adults Review, and a review conducted into the current support provided to adults with complex needs and multiple disadvantages.

South and West Herts Health and Care Partnership (SWHHCP)
A trustee of Healthwatch Hertfordshire is a regular attendee at this board, and our CEO is the co-Chair of the coproduction committee. This ensures we are close to the activities, priorities and community engagement of communities covered by this region, and have worked closely with them on community engagement, improving coproduction and raising awareness of services, whilst improving patient feedback.

East and North Herts Health and Care Partnership (ENHHCP)
Our CEO is a regular attendee at this board, and is also the Chair of the Community Assembly, a public and patient engagement space for the partnership. This ensures we are close to the activities, priorities and community engagement of communities covered by this region, and have worked closely with them on community engagement, improving coproduction and raising awareness of services, whilst improving patient feedback.

Over the past quarter, we have also supported the partnership In their work of articulating their coproduction aspirations and enabling this through governance arrangements (participating in three partnership workshops), as ENHT prepares to take on the host role for the partnership.

We continue to attend and facilitate a number of discussions to help ENHHCP develop their vision for the future of neighbourhood health and care delivery.

Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Health and Care Partnership (MHLDAHCP)
Our CEO is a regular attendee at this board, ensuring we are close to the activities, priorities and community engagement of communities covered by this region, and have worked closely with them on community engagement, improving coproduction and raising awareness of services, whilst improving patient feedback.

Over the past quarter, we have supported the partnership in their work to review and update the All Age Autism Strategy – presenting to the board on our research of support for Autistic adults diagnosed in adulthood.

<u>Quality Monitoring</u>

East of England Strategic Review of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre
We support the NHS England East of England Specialised Commissioning Team and NHS London and their review of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre (run by East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust at the Hillingdon Trust in north Middlesex). The aim is to organise

services in ways that provide the best modern care for patients. A public consultation is anticipated, which we are happy to support once live to ensure the breadth of our communities have the opportunity to participate.

We regularly attend the Strategic Review of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Programme Board meetings/progress updates, including the current challenges around funding and how this affects the consultation process.

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

We received a request for feedback about Potterells Medical Centre, Hatfield. CQC also asked us to submit feedback for their upcoming well-led inspection of the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust. We are working with Healthwatch Essex to submit a joint response.

Holding to Account Meetings

We hold internal bi-monthly 'holding to account' reviews of the latest concerns and information (local, regional and national) and feedback from signposting and research and engagement. These meetings support our holding to account conversations with key service providers in the area, the details for the quarter are provided in the next section. Key themes and actions from the October meeting centred around:

- Digital inclusion and GP access
- Patient transport services
- Hospice funding crisis
- Mental health discharge processes
- Complaints handling capacity
- Implementation of new patient rights (Jess's Rule)
- Children and Young People - access challenges

Meetings with Service Providers

The meetings offer an opportunity to raise issues from our research and signposting and the NHS and Herts County Council have been very receptive to feedback as to how their services need to be improved. These meetings also covered: finance, system pressures, patient and community involvement, and our research programme and its findings. These meetings complement the meetings with senior commissioning staff mentioned above.

West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

- We met with their Chief Nurse, sharing insights from our signposting and feedback service; on this occasion, issues related to concerns about the appropriate independence of the complaints team to the staff they investigate, adherence to the Accessible Information Standard, and cancer care targets.
- We met with the Chair and CEO of the Trust, sharing our latest insights from patient feedback, our future work program and their priorities, including a strong focus on health

inequalities. They also shared how their patient experience and patient quality performance has changed over the past few months.
- Regular meetings with the Development Director to shape the Health & Care Partnership Co-production Board agenda.

East & North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust
- We met with the Trust's Chief Nurse, Deputy Chief Nurse and other senior colleagues to discuss insights from our signposting and feedback service; the matters included regular medication regimes potentially being altered unnecessarily as an inpatient, access to digital medical records, and concerns around the non-emergency patient transport service.
- Regular meetings with Development Director and team to shape the Community Assembly agenda.
- We met with the trust Chair and CEO to discuss our recent and upcoming program of work and encourage them to strategically consider patient voice as they become the lead trust in the area.

The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust
- Regular attendance at the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust Patient Experience Group. We shared our current Research and Engagement programme so that members could access any projects/reports that were of interest to them through the links and emails provided. Members were also invited to share any themes/focus areas about what we should include in the 2026/27 work programme.

Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) and The Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Health and Care Partnership
- We met with the Chief Operating Officer at the Trust, sharing insights from our signposting and feedback service; this time, we discussed a concern about interfacing between the Older People's Mental Health Service and the Talking Therapies Service, as well as some difficult feedback regarding Forest House Adolescent Inpatient Unit.

Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCT)
- We met with the CEO and Chair of HCT, sharing insights from our signposting and feedback service, but also discussing the new NHS arrangements and our work program more broadly, as well as discussing our future work program. They shared their reflections on winter preparedness and waiting list challenges for young people and community services, and talked about the progress of their plans on paediatric audiology.

Circle Healthcare - Musculoskeletal Services in South and West Herts

- We held our regular meeting with the GP Engagement and Community Integration Lead; they updated us on plans to further digitalise their services. We shared feedback about waiting times and concerns around service provision for the digitally excluded, which Circle addressed.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)

This quarter:

- We met with the lead of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and colleagues in the Integrated Care Board to discuss our Refugees and Asylum seeker insights and how they might monitor progress against change recommended in our report
- We met with the HCC lead on Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Youth Councils
- We arranged and attended a Children's Services Strategic Introduction with the Executive Members for Education, SEND and Inclusion, and Children's Social Care.
- We also met with the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Executive Director for Adult Social Care.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Health and Wellbeing Board

- We are regular attendees of the Board, which took place in October this quarter. Topics discussed included the Herts Sensory Strategy Refresh and the ICS's Winter Plan for 2025/26.
- We also presented on the findings of our and Healthwatch Essex's joint survey into the Integrated Care Partnership's 'I Statements', which included the views of over 1,700 residents.

National & Regional Meetings, including Healthwatch England

During the quarter, our CEO met with:

- The Head of Partnerships and Engagement from Specialised Commissioning for NHS England and the six Integrated Care Boards in the East of England, and the Direct Commissioning for NHS England in the East of England Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Review to discuss the upcoming public consultation and how best to have public engagement.
- The Program Director for the University of Hertfordshire Integrated Care System at the University of Hertfordshire
- The Health Inequalities Lead within the Personalised Care Team, Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB
- The Place Director for East and North Hertfordshire at Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB
- The local Healthwatch CEO network, on several occasions

Local Councils & Voluntary and Community Sector Partners

This quarter included:

Contract Monitoring Projects & Activity Qtr 3 (October – December 2025)

- Meetings with the Community Manager for POhWER in Hertfordshire
- Attendance at the local Voluntary, Community, Faith & Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Conference
- Meetings with the Chair of Citizens' Advice's Hertfordshire-wide CEO network, and the CEO of Watford Citizens' Advice
- Meeting with the University of Hertfordshire's Director of the Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care (CRIPACC)
- Head of Operations from Safer Places, a domestic violence and abuse charity

3. Budgets & Finance (Budget sheets; reasons for any significant under or overspend, as well as highlight any findings/issues which may impact on this contract)

HwH Management Accounts Qtr 3 20252