

## Contract Monitoring Projects & Activity Qtr 4 (January – March 2026)

### I. Projects & Activities Overview

#### Research & Engagement

See embedded document below:



Research%20and%20Engagement%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 reflection and assessment against the Connected Lives framework and make practical improvements where applicable. We completed the final visits during this quarter, and all care homes have now been provided with a feedback report from our visit.

#### Online NHS Trust Consultation

*The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England are working to establish a new online service – Online NHS Trust – which will deliver online elective care as part of the NHS.*

*The consultation sought views on how elective care could be delivered digitally through a new national trust, with the ambition of reducing waiting times and improving access through the NHS App.*

Our response (submitted 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026) draws on a substantial body of local evidence, including our Online GP Services research (500 respondents), Cost of Living survey (7,043 respondents), Frailty and Ageing engagement, our recent Your Voice Matters survey, focus groups with visually impaired and D/deaf residents, and insights from voluntary sector partners including Age UK Hertfordshire, Dacorum Community Voluntary Service, Age Friendly Communities and Citizens' Advice Watford.

#### Annual Business Plan and Engagement & Research Plan for 2026/27

Both of these were developed with input from the our Every Voice Matters community survey, the extensive number of engagements over the past year, discussions with our team and board and taken to the Board Advisory Committee and then Board for approval.

#### Communications

- Distributed latest 'Headlines' (news articles) to NHS, stakeholder comms contacts and local media
- Media enquiries:
  - Global/Heart re further info about Integrated Care Partnership Survey article and mental health/substance use article (enquiry generated from 'Headlines' email)
  - BBC 3 Counties re future news stories (enquiry generated from 'Headlines' email)

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- Comms and social media to launch findings from:
  - Autistic Adults Report
  - Frailty Report
  - Impact – Stigma Report
- Shared and promoted Mount Vernon public consultation messages
- Supporting local charities, Healthwatch England initiatives, local Councils and NHS/social care organisations via social media

### Website Articles:

- [Our Impact: Breaking the stigma around drug and alcohol use](#)
- [Many older people don't consider themselves frail: Our report finds language affects health interventions](#)
- [Autism diagnosis in adulthood is validating, but finding support can be a whole new struggle](#)

### Other

Recruitment: We are recruiting for a number of new fixed-term contract roles, and held interviews for a new Head of Community Engagement & Research.

## 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. The main items raised during this period included digital exclusion policies implemented by GP Surgeries, and concerning feedback about the quality of First Contact Physio appointments.
- Several meetings with new Central East ICB Chair and CEO, as well as key members of the new leadership team, including that for Hertfordshire
- Met with Health Inequalities Manager at the ICB, to discuss local research and health inequalities.

### **Hertfordshire and West Essex System Quality Group (SQG)**

We updated on our most recent published and upcoming reports as well as highlighting Healthwatch England's recent blog on refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences of the NHS, which heavily references our work. Health providers were invited to share evidence or examples

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of work undertaken to support refugees and asylum seekers to add to the extensive feedback we have had from Hertfordshire County Council and Public Health.

**Hertfordshire Strategic Quality Improvement Group (SQIG) – Care Homes, Supported Living and Home Care**

We updated the group on our Connected Lives care home project and provided an overview of the themes and feedback coming through our signposting service in the last 6 months including feedback on dental support in care homes and transport restrictions in supported living accommodation.

**South and West Herts Health and Care Partnership (SWHHC)**

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 (ENHHC)**

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, and have attended a whole day workshop on Neighbourhood Health and Public Engagement. We continue to attend and facilitate a number of discussions to help ENH HCP 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.

**Quality Monitoring****East of England Strategic Review of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre**

A public consultation on the proposals to relocate the cancer centre to new, purpose-built facilities on the Watford General Hospital site, was finally launched in January and closed on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

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We will continue to support activities through the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Review Programme Board to ensure the final model of care meets the diverse needs of the population it serves, both now and throughout the implementation of the final option chosen.

**Care Quality Commission (CQC)**

CQC asked us to submit feedback for their January well-led inspection of the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust (PAHT). We consulted with the CEO of Healthwatch Essex (as the lead local Healthwatch for PAHT) and provided joint feedback across a number of areas requested.

**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 below.*

- Digital access as the default channel and implications for equity.
- Use and usability of the NHS App and a potential "resident app" to connect all health and care records locally (an East and North Herts aspiration that will need national infrastructure).
- Cancer pathways because of the Government's recently published [National Cancer Plan](#).
- Jess' Rule, which is being promoted in GP surgeries.
- Mental health trends, especially capacity and access.
- Concern that digital systems prioritise efficiency over usability and health literacy.

System change (closure of Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and transfer to the new Central East ICB) will initially mean reduced ICB capacity to answer our holding to account questions and will need to be monitored.

**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 the newly hired Matron for Learning Disability and Autism at the trust, as well as the Lead nurse for Safeguarding Adults and strategic lead for learning disability, to share our work and understand how their role will be contributing to improved experience of local patients.

**East & North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust**

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This quarter:

- 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 long waiting times for 1<sup>st</sup> outpatient appointments and medical scans across a number of the Trust's services, as well as delays in responses to complaints.
- Met with several members of the planning and partnerships team to discuss ways in which we can support their efforts to broaden and engage communities in transformation work.

### **The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust**

- Following work with the Head of the Patient Experience Group, information to support veterans and their families was reinstated on the Trust's website this quarter (after it had been initially deleted during their website redesign).
- We also met with the CEO and Deputy CEO (Chief Nurse) to discuss ways of better engaging communities.

### **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; concerns raised included service users being told that autism necessarily is coupled with depression and psychosis, and a support group being closed due to lack of staff.

### **Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCT)**

We met with the Director of Nursing and raised a query around the provision of First Contact Physiotherapists in GP Surgeries in east & north Herts.

### **Circle Healthcare – Musculoskeletal Services in South and West Herts**

We met with the GP Engagement and Community Integration Lead and discussed as follows:

- Circle's website redesign.
- The new patient portal and how that will benefit patients in south and west Hertfordshire.
- Upcoming closure of the FCP (First Contact Practitioner) part of the provision but with a possible workaround for vulnerable patients.
- Themes from the spike in signposting feedback that we received during January and February.

### **Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)**

- We continued our membership of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, reading papers as and when they are sent out.
- We presented our recent work on Autism diagnosis in adulthood at two Autism Strategy Delivery Group meetings.
- We met with the two leads for the HCC Better Health Bus, to discuss collaboration

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- Met with Director of Adult Care Services and Leadership Team
- We met with Director of Public Health and the Executive Member
- Met with Director of Children's Services and their Executive Members
- Attended the whole day Strategic Coproduction Board Workshop
- Met with leads supporting Health and Wellbeing Board, to discuss ways of supporting the strategy refresh
- Attended the Strategic Coproduction Board Meeting

#### **Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Health and Wellbeing Board**

- At the January Health and Wellbeing Board meeting we contributed to discussions on the revised approach to developing the refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy and on developing the new approach to neighbourhood health in conjunction with the establishment of the Integrated Care Board's Neighbourhood Health Delivery Committee.
- Subsequently in this quarter we met Hertfordshire County Council staff to assist with the thinking behind the strategy development proposals to go to the April Board meeting.
- In March we took part in a workshop at which a select group of Health and Wellbeing Board members considered how best to develop the Neighbourhood Health Delivery Committee's membership, agenda and ways of working.

#### **National & Regional Meetings, including Healthwatch England**

- Met with the Director of the Centre for Research in Public Health and Community (CRIPACC) at University of Hertfordshire about future collaboration. Also met with two researchers looking at the effects of temporary accommodation on child health, to share the learnings from our refugees and asylum hostels work.
- Meeting with leadership from the Department of Health and Social care
- Quarterly meeting with national Healthwatch CEO Network
- Quarterly meeting with Healthwatch East of England regional CEO network
- Monthly meeting with Healthwatch Essex CEO

#### **Local Councils & Voluntary and Community Sector Partners**

- Several meetings with the full Voluntary Community Faith & Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Alliance steering group as well as meetings with their Chair, and leadership team
- Chief Executive of Citizens' Advice Watford. Also met with the network of Citizens' Advice Chief Executives across Hertfordshire to discuss potential collaboration opportunities, as well as another meeting with the Research and Campaigns cluster group leads at Citizens' Advice.
- Meeting with Carers in Herts lead regarding future collaboration.

### **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)**

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