

Healthwatch Hertfordshire Board Meeting
10am on Tuesday 10th June 2025, Online

Board Members: Eve Atkins, Alan Bellinger, Alex Booth, Jan Taylor, Ryan Heard, Enoch Kanagaraj, Ramone Samuda, Neil Tester (Chair)
Executive Team: Ivana Chalmers (Chief Executive), Fiona Corcoran (Deputy Chief Executive), Nuray Ercan (Deputy Chief Executive, Governance and Operations)
Visitors/others: Susan Ebanyat (HCC Commissioner)
Apologies: Chloe Gunstone, Amanda Hutchinson, Amy Willcox-Smith

1. Welcome, apologies and register of interests

Neil welcomed everyone present and noted apologies, as above. Register of interests are correct as at the time of publication.

2. Minutes of 27th March 2025 and outstanding actions

[The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed off.](#)

Neil noted that all actions are complete.

3. Chair's update

Neil referred to his report circulated as part of the meeting papers and highlighted the following:

- Really pleased regarding our new Board appointments which will strengthen Board. He thanked those who took part in the recruitment process and also thanked the staff team for such a professional process which candidates remarked upon.
- Thanked Ramone and Amanda for taking on representation and work relating to West Herts Hospital Trust, South and West Herts Healthcare Partnership, and Amanda for the Primary care ICB meeting attendance.
- The Team are currently producing the annual report and he has just seen the first draft. It was noted that he really enjoyed reading it and is amazed at the sheer amount of work the team continued to deliver given it was a transitional year with the change of CEO. Board will receive an opportunity to comment on it shortly, before its legal submission to Healthwatch England deadline of 30th June and its publication thereafter.
- Since writing the report, Neil informed that with regards to the national and local system context part of his paper, a pre-briefing before tomorrow's spending announcement means that the NHS is likely to get an above-inflation increase, though not as much as in previous years, so the squeeze will continue to be felt.
- Neil and Ivana met with Catherine Dugmore, new Chair at West Herts Hospital Trust and strengthening this important relationship.

[Board noted the decisions made by email and also the Chair's report.](#)

4. Chief Executive's update

Ivana referred to her report circulated as part of the meeting papers which sets the backdrop for what is coming later in the paper pack. It also flags a piece of work that is upcoming for the Directors of HwH Trading Ltd. She highlighted and invited reflections on the following areas:

- The partnering conversations we've had

- On the work we've done on the Community Assembly and South and West Herts Healthcare Partnership Coproduction Board
- Outlined work that is on track and has been completed as part of our objectives within the annual business plan, the reporting on which will evolve as we get feedback from Board

Board discussed the potential for changes to the ICB boundaries and asked how much work needs to be done on relationships with the local Healthwatch that we may be clustered with. Ivana responded that it is a moving picture though Healthwatch England has put together a webinar conversation to talk about clustering so we have national level assurance. Ivana is also part of the East of England Chief Executives network of local Healthwatch and a couple have reached out to discuss coverage and being opportunistic about reviewing our resources. Additionally we are having conversations about the impact of a new clustering on patients and hospital care as well as a shift into community spaces / at home care. We will need to keep plugged into this evolving picture and it will be interesting to see how this develops between local partnerships and their surrounding geographies. Board were encouraged to feed their insights back into us, both when representing as well as personal experiences.

Board invited Ivana's early reflections on progress on the business plan. Ivana highlighted that at a time of change more time is required to connecting with stakeholder conversations, the level of which we might not have anticipated when the plan was set, even though we knew that we might need to reprioritise. New project areas also require this groundwork; in identifying key contacts and developing those connections and relationships which then competes with other areas of work. One of the things the Leadership Team have talked about is if there is a new reconfiguration of our local authority and ICB then we have to prioritise those conversations. So flexing and reprioritising is important but for the most part the core things are on track currently. It is however early days and in another quarter's time we might have a different update as the work around the reconfiguration is coming up and we will see the impact on us then. We will also shortly be reviewing the list of representation meetings to think about what really enables our work programme for the year and our relationships.

Ivana highlighted the challenge of the reconfiguration is that at the moment key external stakeholders we work with still do not know what their remits will be and cannot always look beyond the next 3-6 months, so delivering impact across some areas of our partnering and stakeholder engagement may be challenging.

Neil asked for Board reflections on the changes ahead, and to share any past learning from Trustees who can perhaps remember the last one and what our role might be navigation through this period of change. Board discussed and raised the following points:

- We are yet to see the findings of the Penny Dash review and whether this affects how local Healthwatch are commissioned
- Pleased that our plan focusses on developing relationships within social care because this shouldn't be affected as much
- The challenge is that we are wanting to look upwards but at the same time the emerging action coming is to look at locality/neighbourhood level. We need to do both as that will be the point at which health and social care will come together.

Ivana agreed with the above and summarised that there is a dual shift; on one hand its hyper local and on the other it broader and more strategic focussing on a broader geographical shift. Our impact within both will be a challenge we need to navigate and it will be about identifying the 'sweet spot'.

[Board noted the report.](#)

5. Our role and approach during systems change

This has come out of a number of discussions Neil and Ivana have had about this time of uncertainty within the system and how Board enable and support the staff team to focus on the right things. The three questions within the paper were to prompt a wider discussion. Neil added that he is keen to hear Board's thoughts on how we demonstrate that we're across change and being effective to continue the next phase of thinking, for both the Executive Leadership Team's planning and for further discussions at the Strategic Board meeting and beyond.

Ivana said it is about going back to the purpose of Healthwatch and go back to its principles of being independent and to champions people's voices. The tenacity point is important here about making sure we tell people what we are doing that they don't see, so therefore crafting the narrative. So there are two important things; where our work is adding value and how we talk about the work we are doing.

Board reflected and raised the following points:

- The increasing importance of HCPs, and the consolidation of the ICBs and the impact of budget cuts and changes of accountability for delivery
- It is important to communicate with clarity on where we fit into the new organisational system structure – but to continue to put 'people's voices and experiences' at the centre.
- Being the trusted independent voice when putting information out will hopefully give clarity and reassurance as an organisation outside of the changes
- The importance of not losing our link to the 'grass roots level', and the communities whose issues we champion, making sure we continue to raise awareness of how we make a difference and tell that narrative publicly.
- Thinking about how to leverage the system change as an opportunity to re-engage with people in Hertfordshire
- Talk about what we are doing in relation to the upcoming 10 year plan when published
- Making sure we continue to work successfully with Hertfordshire County Council and the Health and Wellbeing board, Health Scrutiny and Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the new Executive Members and Directors.

Neil summarised that everyone's really clear that we are focussing on the people that the coming change affects and we are developing a list of questions to raise with decision makers about how they are informing, involving, and considering the public when making changes and choices. Ivana and Neil will continue this conversation offline and bring back to consideration at the Board Strategic Away Day.

[Action: To bring system change and impacts on communities to the Strategic board away day.](#)

6. Contract monitoring

Nuray introduced the contract monitoring pack and noted that the team have been busy with delivery of core services as well as drafting the Annual Report, recruiting three new Trustees and planning for their induction as well as finalising the Annual Accounts.

Together with commissioners we are in the final stages of negotiating how to reflect updated KPI's within the reporting templates so the next version of the documents may look slightly different.

There were no questions and Board noted the contract monitoring reports.

7. Services delivery 6 monthly update

Ivana updated that Board will have seen this document in another guise previously, but it was agreed that we share this within our public Board meeting papers so that the public can see how we take action and make decisions.

In response to a query about whether we have a relationship with the new Executive Member for Adult Care Services, Neil confirmed that this will be underway shortly as she is also the new Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board which he is Vice Chair and a meeting is in the diary.

It was observed that within the signposting section of the report it doesn't breakdown the services discussed / themes raised under the 'local and national commissioning' and 'social care/HCC/Care Homes' and a query was raised as to what the issues might be. Nuray responded that they represent the smallest number so it is difficult to theme them.

Ivana added that we do not have as much focus on social care as health and are looking to grow this in the coming year. Board were also reminded that it is a good thing that less people contact us about social care services because it indicates that there are more obvious and easily accessible/navigable ways to get information about social care.

Action: Provide Ramone any themes under 'local and national commissioning' and 'social care/HCC/Care Homes' outside of the meeting

Board noted the report update.

8. Management accounts as at March 2025

Alan updated that Board conducted a deep dive into the end of year accounts at the last Board Advisory Committee Meeting so will take the paper as read.

He updated that the end of year accounts have been reviewed by and approved by our accountants. Alan recommended the accounts for approval when they come.

Board approved the Management Accounts as at March 2025

9. Board Advisory Committee (BAC)

Alan updated that the BAC had a productive meeting and deep dive into the end of year annual accounts and our position on revenue generation . BAC also discussed the Annual Business Plan, and were satisfied with the approach and how the plan was developed. Finally BAC discussed learning from the recent Trustee recruitment, particularly the challenge with recruiting a Treasurer, and agreed that we would look to create a finance committee to support the upskilling of Board ahead of a repeat of a recruitment drive.

10. Any other business including questions from the public – NA

11. Part 2 – Closed

Next formal meeting of the Board: Thursday 28th August 2025