

Strategic Risk Register

1. Purpose of paper and what trustees are being asked to consider.

This paper presents a first draft strategic risk register, for consideration and discussion. It outlines the process by which this draft is presented, and asks trustees to reflect on whether:

- Key risks are identified and articulated clearly
- Mitigation approaches are sufficient and likely to be effective – and whether further resource or time is needed to ensure this is the case
- Whether the scoring appropriately represents the view of the board at this point in time, and
- Any recommendations for changes.

This register will be brought back to all future meetings of the Board, such that we can continue to ensure we are transparent about the risks and opportunities ahead, mature our risk appetite in order to move cohesively forward through the changes to come, and provide context and justification for the decisions we make.

2. How this risk register was put together

This risk register has evolved over last few months, in the following way:

- Initial conversations about the previous risk register, as it was due for update, were taken to the two Deputy Chief Execs and Senior Research Manager.
- This was followed by an all-staff discussion on the high-level themes and issues and subsequently updated.
- Trustees and the Executive Leadership Team contributed to the development of more strategic risks in response to the announcements about legislative change affecting Healthwatch Hertfordshire, at their away days, Business Advisory Committee and Board meetings over the past few months. A high-level list of strategic risks was produced and presented at the previous meeting of the Board in public.
- Trustees agreed that we should update and continue to review the risk register at each meeting of the Board, and tasked Future Planning Working Group to work out the best way to update the risk register for today's meeting, to include information on mitigation and scores.
- The FPWG delegated the review and update of the risk register to the Chair and CEO.
- In their review, the previous operational risk register was considered in detail, and the risks and mitigations incorporated into the attached – to be taken forward as the strategic risk register for Healthwatch Hertfordshire.

3. Scoring approach

For those trustees and members of the public who have had occasion to review and update the risk register previously, you will notice a difference in the approach to scoring. The Chair and Chief Executive simplified the scoring to a 5 X 5 scale, and the breakdown of this is provided in this paper to support the interpretation of the scores in the risk register.

		Impact 				
		How sever would the outcomes be if the risk occurred?				
 Probability What is the probability the risk will happen?		Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Significant 3	Major 4	Severe 5
	Almost certain 5	Medium 5	High 10	Very High 15	Very High 20	Very High 25
	Likely 4	Low 4	Medium 8	High 12	Very High 16	Very High 20
	Moderate 3	Low 3	Medium 6	Medium 9	High 12	Very High 15
	Unlikely 2	Very low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	Medium 8	High 10
	Rare 1	Very low 1	Very low 2	Low 3	Low 4	Medium 5

Ivana Chalmers and Neil Tester 18th November 2025

Description	Mitigation approaches	Probability	Impact	Score
Category A: Staff wellbeing and retention				
A1. Staff departures compromise our ability to deliver statutory and contractual commitments, regulatory obligations or functions essential for day-to-day operations.	- Staff support offer to strengthen wellbeing and resilience approved and actioned: Includes ongoing EAP, peer support, externally facilitated workshops, external support, courses to build resilience toolkit with Mind. - Continue to celebrate staff efforts in team meetings focusing on change to our communities	Moderate 3	Major 4	High 12
A2: Uncertainty, organisational change and/or changes in workload creates additional stress for staff, leading to sickness absence or staff leaving.	- Undertaken review of activity in business and research plans - Board agreed recognition payment, approach to 2026-27 pay agreed as basis for budget-planning and communicated to staff, November board reviewing redundancy policy. Board agreed proposals for interim external support to reinforce capacity concerns re vacancies	Likely 4	Major 4	Very High 16
Category B: Delivery, reputation, impact and influence				
B3: Change management activity reduces team and individual focus on project delivery and identification of impact.	- Transparency of motivations for decisions in line with purpose – requires clarity of comms messaging and stakeholder management - Continued activity at the most important on line and in person meetings, where residents can see how our work is making a difference - Championing our values, not our interests	Moderate 3	Significant 3	Medium 9

Description	Mitigation approaches	Probability	Impact	Score
B4: Decisions, delivery or communications suggest to the public that we have ceased to be active and effective, are internally focused to the detriment of our external work, are acting in our own organisational interests or are no longer relevant.	- Ensuring our work continues to be relevant by working with public, partners and stakeholders to shape and influence - Continued relationship building and maintenance with Hertfordshire County Council and key system partners and decision makers - Delivery on our commitments and business plan and communicating any changes clearly - Staying in close touch with and maintaining or making fresh contact with decision makers as change happens. - Continued links with other Healthwatch - Tracking and following our impact to ensure partners and decision makers are taking our work seriously. - Ensuring the CEO is enabled to balance their workload between internal focus, delivery of existing commitments, planning for upcoming financial year and enabling board to help steer the organisation through any future change. - Chair and CEO keeping under review in 1:1s and in planning for external meetings - Ensuring that interim support is effectively leveraged to bolster effort in the context of vacancies	Unlikely 2	Major 4	Medium 8
B5: Key system stakeholders disengage or withdraw support, given Healthwatch statutory duties will be absorbed by others in the system.		Unlikely 2	Major 4	Medium 8
B6: Significant external change in NHS and local government structures, leadership and staffing coincide with our own change processes and reduces our ability to identify& maintain purposeful relationships with key decision-makers.		Moderate 3	Major 4	High 12
B7: We fail to balance our statutory and holding to account role appropriately with the need to negotiate the future.		Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10
B8: Reduced quality and/or visibility of key activities to the public and key stakeholders, including information and signposting, research and co-production development	- Ensure quality is maintained, through timely planning and resource management - Ensuring staff are enabled and supported	Moderate 3	Major 4	High 12

Description	Mitigation approaches	Probability	Impact	Score
C: Finance and capacity				
C9: We fail to develop and maintain a financial plan that reflects the potential for reduced income and statutory activity during 2026/27 and beyond.	- Investment in external management accountancy expertise already put in place - Additional support for CEO in place, interim recruitment underway for vacancies, which will create ability to focus on this - Future Planning Working group ensures board and executive focus on this from early stages throughout and ensuring that we build the relevant work and decisions into Board Advisory Committee and Board schedules. - Early budget reviews to ensure clarity of available options - Annual business plan and research program reviewed by board	Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10
C10: We fail to identify and assess appropriate income-generation options, costs and alternative scenarios for the future		Moderate 3	Major 4	High 12
D: Governance, decision-making and compliance				
D11 Trustees do not have the right skills, knowledge, information, advice, systems and processes to make effective decisions that comply with the duties of charity trustees and company directors and that are understood internally and externally.	- Ensuring ongoing compliance with good governance and working closely with CEO to shape board agendas and papers to ensure information is available for sound decision making - Future Planning Working Group of board to help support board decision making, including ensure recent retirement of Treasurer is appropriately assessed for impact - Keep in close contact with Healthwatch England as available information emerges	Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10
D12: The board does not make timely decisions due to not being able to have timely or sufficient information when decisions are required or not having timely meetings in response to key external drivers for decisions.		Moderate 3	Significant 3	Medium 9

Description	Mitigation approaches	Probability	Impact	Score
D13: Board decision-making and/or the rationale for decisions become or appear to become remote or disconnected from staff.	- Board discussions on risk Identify the risks, impacts and mitigations to ensure these are appropriately managed. - Board has agreed to appropriate use of the agreed facility for Chair's action where necessary to expedite decisions. - Ad hoc meetings where necessary to enable decision making - Chair and CEO to ensure Board and staff team are engaged and agreed on options and vision - Continued staff briefings and open communication between staff team and board, where any concerns or considerations could be raised with the CEO. - Ensure staff capacity to focus on compliance is under consideration throughout upcoming efforts, and assurance of this is sought at meetings of board.	Unlikely 2	Major 4	Medium 8
D14: Board decision-making and/or the rationale for decisions become or appear to become unduly weighted in favour of Healthwatch as an organisation rather than our public benefit.		Rare 1	Major 4	Low 4
D15: Lack of a shared vision of desirable and/or intended outcomes between trustees creates confusion for the staff team and hampers a successful outcome.		Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10
D16: The board fails to discharge its ongoing compliance responsibilities as the board of a charity, a company and local Healthwatch organisation, to make relevant decisions transparently or to record decisions and evidence appropriately.		Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10
D17: We fail to deal appropriately with data and intellectual property in the event that our statutory functions cease.		Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10

Description	Mitigation approaches	Probability	Impact	Score
D18: In the event of a planned closure or significant change in organisational form, we fail to comply with our legal and/or constitutional duties concerning the process or to ensure that records and finances are handled in accordance with company and charity law for the requisite periods.		Unlikely 2	Severe 5	High 10