

Annual Business Plan April 2025 – March 2026

Introduction

This paper presents a high level overview of the key projects that the Healthwatch Hertfordshire team intends to deliver over the coming year, as an annual business plan.

- Healthwatch Hertfordshire is a small team that punches well above its weight, and its growing positive reputation, reflected in our increased strategic impact and revenue generation over recent years, is a testament to it being an impactful and valued organisation.
- However, given the local and national, systemic and political changes ahead, we must ensure we are able to prioritise with clarity, in order to be able to create capacity to be agile and responsive.
- Our broad remit and wealth of relationships offer much opportunity, but to ensure our efforts effect positive change we must also be clear about where we can deliver maximum impact so we can prioritise well.

The annual business plan presented here represents a framework from which we are developing team level and individual objectives for the coming year. It will help us focus with clarity on what is most important, evaluate our progress and impact, align our work more efficiently across and between teams, and enable the board to support us in meeting our aspirations.

Recommendation: **Board is asked to endorse the business plan.**

Background

Healthwatch delivers a unique and crucial service

- Healthwatch is set apart from the statutory structures and voluntary and community sectors we work within. We perform public functions, fulfil statutory duties and should only receive public funding. Our role is recognised in law.
- Our core purpose of making sure the views of the public shape the health and care services requires us to be **independent in purpose** (focusing on the most pressing and challenging health and social care issues), **independent in voice** (we can challenge the status quo, and champion marginalised groups who face disadvantage), and **independent in action** (we must

autonomously design and deliver activities that best meet the needs of the people we serve).

- We aspire: 1. To be influential at a strategic level, 2. To be driven by evidence and outcomes, 3. To expand our reach to groups that are not well represented, all whilst 4. Maintaining financial sustainability ([Strategy 2024 – 2028 \(hyperlink\)](#)).

Although independent, we are collaborative and consultative in approach

- The business plan presented today has benefited from a number of conversations we have had over the past four months, both as a whole staff team and with Healthwatch team leads spending significant thinking and planning time on it. We have also welcomed productive conversations with Trustees at our strategic away day, one to one conversations and our last session at the Board Advisory Committee. Trustees have offered some really helpful reflections on the version previously presented, and it was agreed that it would be helpful to build on this and include some additional information on the phasing of activity.
- Within this plan you will see all our services represented, as well as a strand on enabling operational and governance activity.
- The research and engagement annual plan follows later in this paper pack, under item 8, where we recommend the themes we seek to focus on across our work in the coming year – this plan was also built with extensive consultation of the insights derived from our work with the public, conversations with our board and key external stakeholders within the NHS, ICB, HCC and voluntary sector.
- We are actively reviewing ways in which we can best report on our progress against our aspirations to board, in a way that balances the tension between the value and effort. In addition, given we are concurrently refreshing our reporting to our commissioners, this presents an opportunity to consider how we can leverage some of the same reporting mechanisms to the benefit of our board.

Given external changes, we must strike a balanced approach. Not only will the external context affect our communities, but it is also going to affect our work as Healthwatch, and our networks. We must maintain a sense of pragmatism about the annual business plan, with sufficient agility to change or reprioritise, so we continue to deliver the best outcomes for the people of Hertfordshire.

(Links to strategy)	Goals for 2025-2026	Key strands of work supporting this goal <i>Leads are identified by their initial. F-Fiona, N-Nuray, I-Ivana, C-Chloe, TL - all team leaders</i>	Q1 Apr - Jun	Q2 July - Sep	Q3 Oct - Dec	Q4 Jan - Mar	Notes (reflections, risks and dependencies)
Efficient and impactful CORE services (2 & 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximising evidence and insights - Impactful Holding to Account relationships - Build reputation on coproduction expertise - Research and engagement program focuses on key areas of impact and inequalities - Resilient and robust signposting service 	- An impactful and well evidenced Research and Engagement plan	<i>Ongoing planning, activity and evaluation</i>				26-7 planning kicks off in November 25
		- Analyse HTA agendas, make explicit the change we want to see (I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>	Involves trustees on external boards
		- Crystalize coproduction impact aspirations (C, I)	<i>Ongoing planning, activity and evaluation</i>				Working in partnership with HCPs
		- Update HCC reporting in line with updated spec (N)	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>			Opportunity to consolidate with Board reporting
Staff team success and wellbeing (1, 2, 3 & 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create space for team building and support - Ensure clarity of roles and priorities - Audit of function resilience and capacity challenges - Maintain supportive culture and relationships 	- Develop team annual areas of focus (TL)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>	
		- Set up measurable PDR process (objectives) in alignment with business plan (TL) and JDs	<i>Activity</i>		<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	Implement, review at 6 months, evaluate at 12 months.
		- Review of reward and remuneration (TL)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>		To inform FY 26 -7 budget planning
		- Review and create professional development priority plan (TL)		<i>Activity</i>			As part of regular development process
		- Enable ways of working, gaps and overlaps, team building (TL)	<i>Ongoing, via TL strategic meetings and built from annual plan</i>				Enabled via regular line management
Influencing at a strategic level (1 & 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shaping the core of our efforts by 'biggest need and impact' - Clarity on which partnerships require most focus and effort given the opportunity - Grow our comms profile and reach: Create a recognisable brand for HwH that is about insights, tenacity about key issues, trust and simplicity (key messages/audiences) - Leverage Healthwatch national and regional links 	- A clear set of priorities for working with partners including NHS, HCC, political stakeholders and VCSFE sector (F, C, I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	
		- Continued development and review of communications growth plan, key audiences and messages (F)	<i>Ongoing, driven by insights arising from our work and activities to grow target audiences to increase engagement</i>				Work underway, planning and evaluation cyclical
		- Deliver an impactful annual report and AGM (TL)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>		
		- Pilot to test raising brand awareness with insights via comms (F, C, I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	Sharing strategic views of our insights
		- Audit our horizon scanning and external changes responsiveness (I)	<i>Activity</i>				Limited resource available
		- Continue building, collating and effectively using our evidence of impact (F)	<i>Ongoing planning, activity and evaluation</i>				Supports many streams of work
		- Build impact reporting into scoping negotiations and contracts (C, F, I)	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>			
		- Active engagement with Healthwatch regional and national networks, insights and resources for opportunities to bolster impact or revenue (I)	<i>Ongoing, via meetings, 121 conversations, national and local CEO meetings, annual conference and online forums (Workplace)</i>				Dash review and other local and national context will play a part
Enabling and empowering governance (1, 2, 3 & 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore frameworks to better leverage board expertise and interest - Continue to meet statutory, legal and compliance requirements - Clarity of direction and purpose to enable annual business plan 2026 - 2027 	- Pilot ways of working with Vice Chair (N, I)	<i>Ongoing planning, activity and evaluation.</i>				Working in partnership with Trustees. Much of this is new and will require prioritisation, opportunity to co design and meaningfully test ways of working, whilst managing impact on core service delivery. Enabled by ELT and Trustee meetings.
		- Pilot ways of working to build on board expertise including: representation in broader system, horizon scanning, ambassadorial work, volunteering, brokering relationships (networks) (N, I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity and evaluation</i>			
		- Governance review plan for action in FY2627 (N, I)			<i>Planning</i>	<i>Planning</i>	
		- Review annual board cycle for alignment to strategic objectives and annual business plan (N, I)	<i>Activity</i>				
		- Recruit and induct three new trustees (N, I)	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>			
A financially sustainable HwH (1, 2, 3 & 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actively protect and stimulate current income streams - Explore new income and partnership opportunities - Develop clarity on true cost of activity - Ensure FY 26 - 7 budget is developed alongside business planning 	- HCC contract relationship successful, contract renewed with evidence to back funding to 100% of cost base at renewal (N, I, F)	<i>Ongoing planning, activity and evaluation. Updates to reporting in line with new KPI spec to be completed by mid-year.</i>				Current contract will be in year 2 of 3 in FY 25 -6. Major review Sep 27.
		- Audit of public funding streams, opportunities and upskilling needs (C, I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Activity</i>	Testing continues, underpins FY 26-7 budget planning
		- Explicitly capture and promote our unique 'offer' to various stakeholders (C, I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Activity</i>	Feedback from stakeholders to inform final version
		- An updated research program costing model (C, I)	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>		Updated costing model underpins new contracts from Q4
		- Ensure FY 26 - 7 budget planning most effectively supports new business plan (I)			<i>Planning</i>	<i>Activity</i>	Includes new Treasurer induction