

Healthwatch Hertfordshire Board Meeting
10am on Thursday 29th August 2024,
Hybrid, Kings Court, London Road, Stevenage, SG1 2NG

Board Members: Eve Atkins, Alan Bellinger, Ryan Heard, Amanda Hutchinson, Enoch Kanagaraj, Sally Orr, Ramone Samuda (online), Jan Taylor, Neil Tester (Chair)
Executive Team: Geoff Brown (Chief Executive), Fiona Corcoran (Deputy Chief Executive), Nuray Ercan (Deputy Chief Executive, Governance and Operations), Chloe Gunstone (Senior Research Manager), Alice Lovell (Office Manager)
Visitors/others: Alice Kotey (Royal Association for Deaf People) & two interpreters
Apologies: Alex Booth, Susan Ebanyat (HCC Commissioner), Stephanie Smith (NHS Herts and West Essex ICB), Amy Willcox-Smith

1. Welcome, apologies and register of interests

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

2. Minutes of 16th June 2024 and outstanding actions

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed off.

Geoff and Neil updated Board on the status of item within the action tracker.

3. Chair's update

Neil referred to his report circulated as part of the meeting papers and thanked everyone involved for their efforts in producing the Annual Report and organising the Annual General Meeting.

Board agreed and noted the following:

- The updated Board terms for the four reappointed Trustees
- The signing of the new core contract
- The Chair's update report

4. Chief Executive's update including: Organisational performance and contract monitoring

The contract monitoring documents for quarter 1 have been circulated as usual. Geoff gave an overview of range of documents produced for contract monitoring.

Geoff highlighted that it has been another busy quarter which can be seen by the wide range of compliments that we have received, recognising the whole range of services. The organisational performance RAG (red, amber, green) rated document is produced for Board only to monitor performance, and most areas are showing green, indicating that they are on target. The one area showing as amber is social media where we can see that fewer people are using Facebook now.

Now that the new contract with Herts County Council has been drawn up they may wish to draw up new performance indicators and Board may also wish to reflect on these within the internal organisational performance document concurrently.

A lot has been put in place preparing for Ivana's start next week which includes a full induction programme, sessions with external partners and she has had sessions with Geoff, Neil, Nuray and Fiona as part of the Executive Leadership Team.

Nuray reminded Board that the Comms team are currently reviewing the comms targets within the organisational performance RAG rated document as per Geoff's update at the last Board Advisory Committee meeting update. These will be changed for the next reporting period.

Fiona gave a supplementary update to Board about comms activity and its impact on social media and newsletter subscribers.

Geoff updated that we are delaying the launch of the International Recruits research report until after 19th September when the ICB People Committee will be held because it was felt that it would have much more impact once discussion had taken place. Geoff commended the Trusts for responding to some the more immediate recommendations by taking speedy action.

5. Coproduction and the role of HWH

Geoff and Chloe talked to the report and said that they very much had a shared perspective on the opportunities and challenges involving coproduction. Conceptually it is something that we would want to encourage and see as good practice. We've been increasingly asked to independently chair/lead these initiatives which has benefitted both patients, communities and the NHS and Social Care in that all those voices are equal when it is chaired by an independent organisation.

Geoff drew Board's attention to the last page of the report highlighting the opportunities our involvement has brought including emphasising our independence, raising our reputation, being key players within both strategic and operational matters within the NHS. It has also been effective in bringing in revenue both in terms of setting the models up and ongoing support and chairing. Challenges include the management of the meetings and takes resource. It is quite demanding and requires a firm understanding of the various issues being discussed. Linked to this, because we chair and produce the notes, attendees perception can be that we have more of a role to make things happen than those who are ultimately responsible for driving the change.

Geoff and Chloe took comments and questions. The Board reflected that it was a great situation for us to be in whether we were able to bring people together to enable shared conversations and change but also expressed caution about not being a tick box exercise for the Integrated Care Board (ICB) delivering coproduction. A question was asked about whether we have the emphasis right on what our role is and whether this has been blurred. Geoff responded to say that there must be a commitment from organisations to coproduce and if they don't they are held to account by the Coproduction Board, and if it is not achieved they must explain why. The role we have as Chair enacts our power of holding to account and highlights our independence, so if something has not happened it is not seen as our responsibility. The space that we have entered into is to provide a practical solution to a problem that the NHS had of wanting to change power within the way that they worked and develop services but were not sure how to do it. Therefore they commissioned us to be independent and build those links. The support we've provided with

the administration has been pragmatic. Now that there is more understanding and with more capacity within the NHS we may wish to pull back from this element of support. We could then focus our attention on providing an advisory role on how to ensure good coproduction continues. Finally there was an appreciation that coproduction does provide a vehicle to hold the system to account, raises our reputation and provides revenue.

Neil summarised that we need to be really clear between ourselves, with the system and the public about what our role is, and why we do what we do. Neil proposed that he discuss this with Ivana and build it into the Strategic Board meeting in December which will give the team enough time to think about any implications for the business plan for 2025-26 onwards.

[The Board agreed this way forward.](#)

6. Finance – Management accounts as at June 2024

Alan reminded the meeting of the financial model and gave an overview of the accounts as at June 2024. He focussed on the projected forecast for year-end and explained that:

- We are forecasting a positive variance of 4.5k within staff costs at year end
- We are showing a 9k positive variance on non-staff costs
- Our core funding from HCC and variation contracts is showing a 7k positive variance
- So far we are forecasting 63k in revenue which will mean overall we are forecasting a 6k surplus at year end, with 380k in reserves
- Overall we are looking to finish the year positively

The Board noted an error within the excel formula total figure for FY24/25 Year End.

[Action: Amend the reserves forecast total figure for FY24/25 Year End.](#)

[Board signed off the Management Accounts as at June 2024 pending the correction as above.](#)

7. Board Advisory Committee (BAC)

Alan updated that the BAC had a productive meeting with a good, open discussion about health and social services landscape adding to our understanding of the issues and where we can make impact.

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

[Board agreed for Jan Taylor to take up the role of Health and Safety Director.](#)

9. Farewell to Geoff

Neil expressed his and Board's gratitude to Geoff for everything he has brought to HwH and done for the people of Hertfordshire over the past decade. He said that we wouldn't be where we are without him, we wouldn't have achieved what we have without him and we wouldn't be expecting to go where we're going next without him. We now have a solid transition ahead.

Geoff reflected on his time at HwH and said that it is the job he's enjoyed more than any other he's had and the most fulfilling. Part of this was ensuring that the patient voice has been heard and also to see changes and the impact we have had. Our holding to account role has been key and the NHS and social care has appreciated our independence and encouraged these voices to be heard and this has not been a challenge for us in the way that it has been for some other local Hw.

It has been brilliant working with compassionate people both within and without the organisation and working with a great staff team and very supportive Board. He didn't realise how popular we would be as an organisation, with over 130 people applying for a post recently because of our national reputation! We also wouldn't have known the national impact we would have and in early days our work on the access to GP services won us a national award and that has set the scene for us having that national voice. This has been built on with the work we have done around the cost of living project and health inequalities. It has also provided national stages and he didn't expect to be speaking at national events such the Kings Fund most recently. We have also been involved in conversations that we didn't expect so when the then leader of the opposition visited the county to find out about health issues we were part of that small group of people who met them.

Geoff thanked patients, carers and communities as without their input we wouldn't have achieved what we have. He thanked people within health and social care who care for people every day and linked to this all the work done by the voluntary, community, faith, social enterprise sector. He has been very fortunate to work with four very different chairs and they have all brought something different to the organisation but have all been very committed and supportive to him and he gave thanks to them all. He also thanked the various Board who have had just the right balance of strategic thinking and challenge. The team has been brilliant - commitment, insight, values and behaviours that the team demonstrate on a daily basis, particularly what Nuray and Fiona do in leading teams and setting the vision. It has very much been a 'can do' organisation and perhaps Ivana will be better at saying no as he said that it has been one of his weaknesses and asked the Board for support for Ivana to do this more.

He also shared a few thoughts about governance and ways forward for Board and instead of the 5S's they're 'P's'!

- The Board bring very strong **principles** and it is important that these values are taken through at a strategic level
- Reflecting on **proportionality** - we are a small organisation, how much can we do? It is very easy to get involved with everything so it is important to say no sometimes
- **Protecting** the organisation as it is and is very strong and Ivana is very keen to ensure that she is not coming in to change everything and shake its foundation
- Ultimately we are there for **people**
- The balance between **pragmatism** and principles sometimes - the coproduction item was a good example of this
- **Paradoxes** of what it could be like - when we had more volunteers you'd think that it would have enabled us to do more but there was more work in managing volunteers than the contribution we got from volunteers. In governance terms, when we had more committees and more meetings potentially that could have led to more actions and more being done but actually probably led to less being done because of time administering and managing these. As a Board help can be beneficial but if they get too involved the paradox is that it can mean more work for the executive team.

As a Board, with the old and new coming together there is lots of strength and expertise relevant for the leadership for the organisation. Geoff said good luck to the Board and said that he is sure they will do a brilliant job going forward. The Board thanked Geoff and said that they will miss him, that he is sensible, compassionate and have done things in a really smart way. On behalf of the Board Neil gave Geoff a gift and wished him luck on the exciting next stage of his life.

10. Part 2 – Closed

Next formal meeting of the Board: Thursday 28th November 2024

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