



# Work Programme

April 2026 – March 2027

# Contents

Strategic Aims – Healthwatch Bedford Borough 2026/27

Priority areas for Healthwatch 2026/27

Measuring Impact

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS OF A LOCAL HEALTHWATCH

1. To obtain the views of local residents on health and social care services, to help shape the delivery and improve the quality of the design and commissioning of services.
2. To make recommendations to service providers and commissioners in developing, designing, shaping, and improving the quality-of-service delivery.
3. To support the involvement of local residents in the designing and commissioning of local services.
4. Provide information and advice to inform local residents on choices available to them.
5. To escalate findings to local commissioners and providers and nationally to Healthwatch England along with recommendations for service change.

# Introduction

## About us

Local Healthwatch organisations are established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to be a champion for people using health and social care services. Healthwatch Bedford Borough

Healthwatch Bedford Borough Work Programme 2026/27

---

is hosted by Engaging Communities Solutions CIC (known as ECS) – a community interest company with a focus on delivering Healthwatch, social research and advocacy services. Healthwatch Bedford Borough (HBB) will elevate the voice of health and social care service users and ensure they have an opportunity to speak and be listened to about their concerns and praise of their health and social care experiences.

We will ensure the views of the public and people are considered by those who commission and provide services.

## **Our responsibilities**

By law, all local Healthwatch are required to:

- Provide information and signposting about health and social care services.
- Monitor concerns and complaints.
- Enable people to feed back about their experiences of health and social care services.
- Collate information and compile reports about people’s experiences and views.

Local Healthwatch have the benefit of a national umbrella organisation, Healthwatch England, from which HBB receives support. Healthwatch England collects intelligence from the Healthwatch network, identifying national themes and producing reports on common areas of concern. They can raise issues at a national level.

## **We will meet our responsibilities by:**

Listening to people from all communities in Bedford borough; helping to involve people in decisions about their care and how it is delivered, giving people information to make choices about their health and care and working in partnership to make change happen.

Healthcare decisions affect diverse groups of people, so it is essential that all voices are heard – not just those of professionals or the majority population. Listening to people from all communities means creating processes that recognise and respect differences in culture, language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, disability, and lived experience.

## **Why it matters:**

1. **Equity** – Different communities often face unequal access to care or have unique health needs. Listening ensures those differences are addressed.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough Work Programme 2026/27

---

2. **Trust** – Involving patients, families, faith and community representatives builds stronger trust in healthcare systems.
3. **Relevance** – Policies and services are more effective when shaped by the actual experiences of those they serve.
4. **Cultural Respect** – Recognising traditions, beliefs, and values ensures care is delivered in ways people feel comfortable accepting.
5. **Better Outcomes** – Research shows that when patients and communities participate in decisions, health outcomes improve.

# Priority areas from April 2026 to March 2027

Strategic/organisational		
Aim	What are we going to do	Measure of success
To improve strategic oversight of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure board members have the skills and experiences that can contribute to the development of the organisation</li> <li>Ensure volunteer base reflects socio-economic and demographic of the borough population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the skills and experience of our ISAB members</li> <li>Reflect demographics</li> <li>Ensure ISAB members receive the necessary training and support to fulfil their role during the year.</li> </ul>
Increase visibility and accessibility to the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop organisational values that will support our local population</li> <li>Promote visibility of ISAB meetings</li> <li>Improve reputation of the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve accessibility and visibility of the board</li> <li>Improved public attendance at meetings</li> <li>Increased contacts during outreach work</li> <li>Increased reputational presence</li> </ul>
Operational		
Aim	What are we going to do	Measure of success
Act as a conduit to improve youth voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively increase the participation, representation, and influence of young people (aged 16-25) in shaping local health and social care services in Bedford borough, ensuring their voices are heard, valued, and acted upon</li> <li>Use platforms young people actually use (e.g. Instagram, TikTok)</li> <li>Make information easy to understand and more engaging for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation more opportunities for young people to share their views (e.g. surveys, targeted outreach)</li> <li>Build on existing partnerships with schools, Bedford College, and the University of Bedfordshire</li> <li>Ensure diverse voices are included (different cultural backgrounds, abilities and communication methods)</li> <li>A marked increase in patient feedback from this cohort</li> </ul>
Digital health access project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand barriers people face when using digital health services (e.g. online</li> </ul>	We will:

	<p>GP bookings, NHS App, website feedback portals, other Apps)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess digital confidence across different age groups</li> <li>• Identify barriers (skills, device access, language)</li> <li>• Undertake interviews/focus groups with older adults, people with disabilities, non-English speakers</li> <li>• Test systems with real users via 'task testing' - asking participants to:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Book a GP appointment online</li> <li>2. Log into Apps</li> <li>3. Find key info and results</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake 300 surveys (via both digital and face-to-face interviewing)</li> <li>• Undertake 100 in-depth conversations</li> <li>• Undertake 30 task tests</li> <li>• Look for patterns when analysing our findings, e.g. login systems are deemed too complicated, the language is too technical, residents did not know digital options exist.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations to make digital platforms practical and actionable, grouping findings into themes:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access</li> <li>2. Skills/confidence</li> <li>3. System design issues</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Comparison against national reports to gauge effectiveness of local systems.</li> </ul>
Attend statutory committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior attendance at statutory committees of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Adult Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior leaders will maintain a strong and consistent presence at high-level strategic boards and committees across the local and regional health care system.</li> <li>• Through this reputation, HBB will ensure that the voice of patients, service users, carers, and communities is embedded within strategic discussions and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Senior leaders will bring evidence-based insight drawn from enquiries, outreach activity and stakeholder feedback, highlighting emergency issues, inequalities, and opportunities for improvement.</li> <li>• Record attendance and actively participate in discussions, promoting HBB as a trusted source and critical friend.</li> <li>• Record demonstrable impact rising out of attendance.</li> </ul>
Provide an inclusive enquiries service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an enquiries service that will be responsive, accessible, and person-centred point of contact for individuals seeking information, advice, or support in relation to health and care services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure the difference the service makes to people who contact us by capturing whether individuals received the information or support they needed.</li> <li>• Increase understanding of rights, choices, and available services.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate through multiple channels, including telephone, email, online feedback portals via HBB and Healthwatch England's portals, and, where appropriate, through face-to-face engagement.</li> <li>• Ensure inclusivity and enable people to engage with the enquiries service in a way that best meets their needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve confidence to take next steps (e.g. accessing services, raising concerns).</li> <li>• Encourage people to update us on the outcome of their enquiry based on our signposting and / or advice.</li> <li>• Access the quality of interactions through user satisfaction ratings, qualitative feedback and testimonials.</li> <li>• Adapt outreach and engagement approaches based upon learning.</li> </ul>
Outreach activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HBBs outreach programme will proactively engage with communities to ensure that people's voices are heard and reflected in the design and delivery of health and social care services.</li> <li>• Deliver a targeted, inclusive, and insight-driven outreach model, focusing on both the general population and groups who are often underrepresented or face barriers to accessing services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and target engagement, developing monthly outreach plans aligned to local priorities, informed by enquiry trends, stakeholder intelligence, and population health data. This will ensure our engagement is purposeful and focused on areas where insight is most needed.</li> <li>• Maintain a visible presence within communities by attending and hosting community events, forums, local groups, and health and wellbeing events.</li> <li>• Prioritise engagement with communities who are less likely to have their voices heard, including those experiencing inequality or marginalisation by working in partnership with community and faith leaders, as well as trusted community organisations.</li> <li>• Use culturally appropriate and accessible engagement methods.</li> <li>• Deliver outreach via trained staff and volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community (e.g. different ages, ethnic backgrounds, religions, abilities). All team members will be equipped with the skills to engage effectively, sensitively, and inclusively.</li> <li>• Feedback captured through outreach activity will be systematically recorded, analysed, and triangulated with enquiry data to look for key themes, trends and areas for improvement.</li> </ul>

# Supporting patient experience

As well as our annual priority projects above, HBB will continue to deliver its objectives supporting patient experience.

Organisational		
Aim	What we are going to do	Measure of success
Enter and View Programme	The Enter & View schedule is determined by intelligence received, follow-up actions from previous visits and following discussion with the CQC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake 12 Enter &amp; View visits</li> <li>• Publish intelligence/insight reports</li> </ul>
Public Feedback	We will encourage the public to give feedback on their experiences of using local health and social care services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect the experiences of 1,000 people between April 2026 and March 2027</li> <li>• Report to the Independent Strategic Advisory Board (ISAB) for governance and assurance</li> <li>• Produce reports that will be published based on the intelligence we receive from members of the public and sent to the relevant boards, commissioners and contract monitoring officers</li> </ul>
Visibility and accessibility	<p>We will ensure our services are widely available, accessible and promoted in a range of formats.</p> <p>Our media platforms will provide regular updates on engagement topics, service delivery changes and enable networking with other organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See an increase in engagement numbers through social media platforms</li> <li>• Ensure that the website is updated regularly with relevant topics and issues</li> <li>• Promote our TikTok platform to consider the needs of the younger population</li> </ul>

Healthwatch Bedford Borough Work Programme 2026/27



<p>Community Outreach &amp; Engagement</p>	<p>Continuing to seek the views of people, HBB will visit a range of community groups and outreach events to seek patient and public opinions and views.</p> <p>We will use a range of engagement models including virtual access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake 120 outreach activities over the course of the year, ensuring a consistent and visible presence across the local area.</li> <li>• Activities will be carefully planned and distributed throughout the year to maximise reach with a balance of community events, targeted engagement sessions, and partnership-led activities.</li> <li>• Each activity will be purpose-driven, will increase awareness of HBB, strengthen community relationships, and ensure that a broad and representative range of voices inform service improvements.</li> </ul>

# Take three minutes to share your experiences



## Easy Read

We want to hear about your health and care experiences.

This Easy Read survey is simple to complete.

Your answers will help Healthwatch Bedford Borough improve services

[Click here for Easy Read](#)

NHS and social care staff are doing everything they can to keep us well during these challenging times, but there might be things that can be improved for you and your loved ones. Please take three minutes to share your story with us.

<https://www.healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk/have-your-say>

# healthwatch

## Bedford Borough

Healthwatch Bedford Borough  
21 – 23 Gadsby Street  
Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
MK40 3HP

[www.healthwatchbedfordBorough.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbedfordBorough.co.uk)

t: 01234 638678

e: [enquiries@healthwatchbedfordBorough.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchbedfordBorough.co.uk)

 @HealthwatchBB

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchBedfordBorough](https://Facebook.com/HealthwatchBedfordBorough)



**Engaging  
Communities  
Solutions**

The contract to provide the Healthwatch Bedford Borough service is held by Engaging Communities Solutions C.I.C.

[www.weareecs.co.uk](http://www.weareecs.co.uk)

t: 0800 470 1518

e: [contactus@weareecs.co.uk](mailto:contactus@weareecs.co.uk)

 @EcsEngaging

 Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS)