Outreach & Volunteering Update

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For: Healthwatch Bedford Borough Board Meeting

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# 1. Overview

Since my appointment, Healthwatch Bedford Borough has significantly increased its presence in the community. We are now visible and active across Bedford, connecting with diverse communities, faith groups, charities, and residents. Outreach has become recognisable through regular Facebook coverage and a consistent 'Diana – Outreach Officer' presence, which has built trust and visibility.

# 2. Actual Work Delivered

- Community Engagement: Attended multiple community events, including Pakistani Independence Day, Queen’s Park Residents meeting, ACCM, PBIC, Carers Bedfordshire, Headway, Faces Partnership, and several coffee mornings/hubs.  
- Reach: Spoke directly with hundreds of residents, gathering feedback on health and social care services.  
- Partnerships: Secured collaboration with major community organisations and charities in Bedford, who now invite Healthwatch to their events.  
- Volunteer Recruitment: 6 volunteers currently onboarding. 4 candidates interviewed this week for new roles. 7 new role profiles are now live on CVS and our website.  
- Promotional Tools: Healthwatch materials (leaflets, pens, lip balms, keyrings) used to raise profile and engage.  
- Youth Outreach: Planning for Freshers’ Fairs at Bedford Sixth Form & Bedford College to expand youth volunteer base.

# 3. Forward Plans (Sep–Oct 2025)

- Attendance at larger Bedford events (already invited).  
- Strengthen partnerships with local community leaders and councillors.  
- Youth recruitment focus through schools and colleges.  
- Enter & View: prepare trained volunteers to deliver visits once recruitment complete.

# 4. Barriers / Challenges

- Capacity: Outreach largely delivered by 1 officer (Diana). CEO Emma supports when available.  
- Planning: Current contract limits long-term outreach strategy beyond March 2026.  
- Staffing: Enter & View research is completed, but delivery is delayed due to lack of volunteers/staff.  
- Volunteer dependency: Reliance on recruiting and retaining a strong volunteer base to expand reach.

# 5. Summary

Healthwatch Bedford Borough outreach has moved from sporadic presence to consistent, recognised engagement across Bedford. We are now on the radar of all major communities, with open invitations to their events. Volunteer recruitment is progressing strongly with 6 onboarding and more roles advertised. Barriers remain around capacity and long-term planning, but momentum is positive and growing.