

## **Healthwatch Bedford Borough contract awarded to Engaging Communities Solutions CIC**

Following a recent tender process, Engaging Communities Solutions CIC has been appointed by Bedford Borough Council to provide Healthwatch services from January 2023.

Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS) is a not-for-profit community interest company which specialises in Healthwatch service delivery and public and stakeholder engagement with the aim of helping to drive improvements in health and social care. The company has extensive experience of delivering independent local Healthwatch services on behalf of local authorities throughout England, as well as research and advocacy services.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough's role is to listen to people's experiences of using health and social care services in the borough, to understand the issues that really matter to local people and the challenges facing the NHS and other care providers. They use this insight to help health and social care services understand how to improve care for local people and reduce health inequalities. Healthwatch can also help local people find reliable and trustworthy information and advice to help them get the care and support they need.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough is part of a network of over 150 Healthwatch across the country. As an independent statutory body, Healthwatch has the power to make sure that NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to public feedback and use it to improve standards of care, locally and nationally.

### **Elizabeth Learoyd, Managing Director of Engaging Communities said:**

*"At ECS, our mission is to inspire change and improve outcomes and we are delighted that we will be working with the people of Bedford Borough to deliver a high quality Healthwatch service. We believe that health and social care providers can best improve services and reduce health inequalities if they listen to people's experiences, and we want everyone in Bedford Borough to be included in the conversation."*

*“From January 2023 when we take over the contract, we will work hard to build on the great work that has already been achieved by the current provider and focus on implementing and delivering our plan for the contract to maximise the impact Healthwatch Bedford Borough can have. We will work with the public, voluntary and community groups, Bedford Borough Council and the local health and care sector, to make sure that Healthwatch Bedford Borough is an effective and representative champion for local people.”*

**John Wright, Chair, Healthwatch Bedford Borough CIC said:**

*"Healthwatch Bedford Borough Community Interest Company (CIC) has worked tirelessly over the past nine and a half years to support people living and working in the Borough, representing their health and social care interests and giving a voice to individuals or groups who are seldom heard.*

*Despite the challenges of the past couple of years, of which there have been many, Healthwatch Bedford Borough has gone from strength to strength and adapted to the rapidly changing environment in which we have found ourselves. None of this would have been possible without the continued commitment, dedication and tenacity of our small staff team and the support of my fellow Directors. As we prepare to handover the role to the new providers, I should like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their endeavours and extend a warm welcome to Engaging Communities Solutions, wishing them well for the future".*

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For more information on ECS: [www.weareecs.co.uk](http://www.weareecs.co.uk)