

Healthwatch Bedford Borough Advisory Board Chair Recruitment Pack

January 2025

About Healthwatch Bedford Borough

Healthwatch Bedford Borough are the local health and social care champion for Bedford. We are independent and have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care.

Healthwatch Bedford Borough is part of a network of almost 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We're here to listen to the issues that really matter to people in Bedford and to hear about their experiences of using local health and social care services. We're entirely independent and impartial, meaning that people can share their stories with us in confidence.

Since January 2023, the Healthwatch Bedford Borough contract has been delivered by Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS), a not-for-profit Community Interest Company that is also responsible for the delivery of several other local Healthwatch throughout England. The ECS Board has overall oversight and accountability for the delivery of the Healthwatch Bedford Borough service. The ECS Board is committed to having a strong and vibrant Independent Strategic Advisory Board (ISAB), rooted in the local Bedford Borough community.

Healthwatch uses feedback to better understand the challenges facing the NHS and other care providers and we make sure people's experiences improve health and care for everyone – both locally and nationally. We can also help people to get the information and advice they need to make the right decisions for them and to get the support they deserve.

We believe it's important that people share their experiences – whether good or bad, happy or sad. If someone has had a negative experience, it's easy to think there's no point in complaining, and that 'nothing ever changes.' Or, if they've had a great experience, that they 'wish you could say thank you.'

Feedback about health and care services is powerful and can help to improve people's lives. So, if anyone needs advice, or they're ready to tell their story in Bedford – we're here to listen.

Our mission, vision and values

Our vision

Our vision is a society where the voice of local people is listened to, and we can all get the health and care we need.

Our mission is to make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.

This means that:

- People help shape health and social care services
- People influence the services they receive personally
- People hold services to account when things go wrong

We will achieve this by:

- Listening to local people, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them.
- Influencing those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and in the future.
- Informing and empowering people to get the most from their health and social care services.
- Working with other stakeholder organisations to champion service improvement and to empower local people to speak out.

Our Values

We are a community-led organisation which takes a bottom-up approach to our work.

We achieve this through:

- **Listening:** We recognise the value of listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including:** We value equality, diversity and inclusion. We acknowledge that everyone must be included in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing:** We value the insight that's gained from analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting:** We act on feedback provided and drive change, recognising that listening must positively affect outcomes and influence important decisions about people's care.
- **Partnering:** We value strong partnerships with health and care services, and the voluntary and community sector to make care better whilst retaining our independence.

Background

Healthwatch Bedford Borough was founded in 2013, following the introduction of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This saw the creation of a network of 152 local Healthwatch across England and a national body – Healthwatch England – which provides support and guidance to the network as well as receiving information about local issues and concerns.

Outgoing Healthwatch Independent Strategic Advisory Board (ISAB) Chair, Harsha Kotecha, was appointed as an Interim Chair in 2023 when Engaging Communities Solutions were awarded the contract. She stepped down in December 2024 after making a hugely valuable contribution during her time on the Board.



Elizabeth Learoyd, Managing Director of Engaging Communities Solutions said:

“Harsha came on board as our Interim Chair when we were awarded the contract in 2023. She has been championing patient voice for over 10 years in various roles both locally and nationally and has built a reputation for forming productive partnerships with providers and commissioners whilst continuing to challenge and advocate for service users. We want to say a big thank you to Harsha for her leadership in the role as Interim Chair.



The work of Healthwatch Bedford Borough is vital in feeding those views to commissioners and providers of services, in order that they improve, in ways which are important to the public.

Being Chair of the Board means you hear from a wide range of local people and organisations on what they feel is important when accessing services. It is then the job of the Chair and the Board to get these views to the right people with the help and skill of Healthwatch staff, ensuring that they respond to the views that have been voiced, and services change as a result. We look forward to finding our next Chair to fill this vital position on our Board”.



Role Description

Commitment and remuneration

We anticipate the time commitment required will total approximately four working days per month. An honorarium of £4,000 pa for the role will be paid in recognition of the time commitment required. All remuneration is taxable and subject to Class 1 NI contributions, but it is not pensionable.

Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses will also be reimbursed in line with our organisational policy.

Purpose of the role

As Chair you will lead and work with the Board in setting up the strategic plan and work programme for Healthwatch Bedford Borough, leading and ensuring the service lives up to its shared vision, aims, and values. In addition to attending and leading formal Board meetings, the Chair will ensure that the service's strategic direction is clearly communicated and provide support and advice to the staff and management team.

The Chair will:

Chair the Healthwatch Bedford Borough Independent Advisory Board, which provides community guidance and oversight on the work of Healthwatch

Be a key spokesperson for Healthwatch Bedford Borough and have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to be perceived by partners and the public as a credible figurehead for a professional, responsive and evidence-based organisation.

Work with the Healthwatch leadership in helping to shape the strategic direction of Healthwatch Bedford Borough, in line with the contract, service specification, legislation and guidance from Department of Health and Healthwatch England, through good governance and effective strategic planning.

Work with the Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS) Board and Healthwatch Bedford Borough Independent Strategic Advisory Board (ISAB) in using public and patient voice to influence matters in health and social care in the Borough and wider region acting as the independent consumer champion.

Responsibilities and tasks

- To Chair meetings of the Board and any development days, ensuring that it functions effectively and carries out its duties.
- To work with the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that Healthwatch Bedford Borough is effective in meeting its objectives in line with the aims and values of Healthwatch.
- To provide strategic leadership to the Board and ensure transparent and effective governance arrangements.
- To support the recruitment, selection and induction of Healthwatch Board members.
- To lead the development of the Healthwatch Board.
- Act as formal spokesperson, ambassador and representative for Healthwatch Bedford Borough where appropriate, upholding the reputation and values of the organisation.
- To ensure that Healthwatch Bedford Borough will actively seek views from all sections of the community – not just from those who shout the loudest, but especially from those who sometimes struggle to be heard as well as those who are from marginalised groups.
- Work with the Healthwatch Chief Executive Officer and Board Clerk to develop appropriate and relevant agendas, ensuring all matters requiring Advisory Board review are discussed.
- To operate within the aims, policies and practices of Healthwatch always and to be committed to and promote the organisation’s vision and values.
- To adhere to the required high standards of corporate and personal conduct as expected in a high-profile public role in accordance with the Nolan Principles.
- In conjunction with the Healthwatch staff team, contribute to the Healthwatch Bedford Borough event attendance including a local Annual Public Meeting to which the public in the locality is invited.

Person Specification

The following attributes are required of the successful candidate:

- Experience of developing and/or leading an organisation that operates for the benefit of communities.
- Experience of leadership through a period of change.
- Experience of working with and influencing leaders of public and community organisations.
- Experience of building and developing successful partnerships, alliances and working relationships with a range of organisations and stakeholders.

The following attribute is desirable but not essential:

- Experience of acting as a media spokesperson, including handling sensitive and potentially controversial topics.

Skills and Abilities

- Good at listening to a wide range of people and feeding back key points and learning.
- Skilled in building strong relationships and collaborative partnerships (can include study groups, project teams etc.)
- Able to work as part of a team and support others.
- Able to Chair meetings effectively, challenge and hold external partners to account.
- Skilled at bringing people together to generate a strong team spirit, able to work collaboratively, building consensus and encouraging effective decision making.
- Commit to representing agreed Healthwatch Bedford Borough views and collective decisions rather than personal views or opinions.
- Have, or demonstrate a willingness to develop, skills to negotiate effectively, challenge positively and influence others.
- Have, or be willing to develop, skills to effectively influence discussions and bring local people's voices to the discussion in a clear and professional manner.
- Ability to use IT and web-based applications incl Microsoft Office 365, Excel

and Word.

Knowledge and experience

- Strong local knowledge of Bedford Borough, its communities and organisations.
- Good understanding of health, social care and wellbeing policy issues/challenges facing the NHS and local authorities.
- Understanding of the national policy challenges facing the health and social care systems which impact on community health and wellbeing.
- Able to demonstrate sound awareness and understanding of the current environment in Bedford Borough and how local services are delivered.
- Experience of leading an organisation as a member of a management Board, committee or senior management team.
- Experience of working in a collective decision-making group such as a Board or group.
- Experience of working with voluntary groups and forums.

Personal behaviour and style

- Passionate about promoting better outcomes in health and social care for all.
- Actively leads by example the professional conduct expected of the Chair's role - listens to others and provides decisive leadership when it is required.
- Proactively demonstrates a strong commitment to Equality legislation.
- Supportive management style that motivates people to deliver their best.
- Open to learning and development, for oneself, staff and the service.
- Willingness to share skills and expertise with other volunteers and act as a mentor or "*buddy*" to a new volunteer.
- Time and commitment to effectively discharge the responsibilities of the post.

How to apply

To apply complete the form below, or [complete the online application form](#)

To arrange an informal chat about the role, don't hesitate to get in touch with Emma Freda, CEO, Healthwatch Bedford Borough:

emma.f@healthbedfordborough.co.uk

Closing date 28 February 2025



We are committed to the quality of our information.

Every three years we perform an in-depth audit

so that we can be certain of this.



healthwatch
Bedford Borough

