

CONFIDENTIAL

AGENDA ITEM 1

**Healthwatch England Committee Meeting
Held in PUBLIC**

**MS Teams Meeting and in Person at
2nd Floor 2 Redman Place, Stratford**

Minutes of Meeting No. 52 – 22 September 2025

Present

Professor David Croisdale–Appleby (DCA)	HWE Chair	
Belinda Black (BB)	Co-Chair Committee Member	
Jane Laughton (JL)	Committee Member	Item 1.7
Professor Sultan Mahmud (SM)	Committee Member	
Dr Joanna Bircher (JB)	Committee Member	
Debbie Bartlett (DB)	Committee Member	Online

In Attendance

Louise Ansari (LA)	HWE Chief Executive	Item 1.5
Chris McCann (CMcC)	Deputy Chief Executive	
Ben Knox (BK)	Head of Communications	
Gavin Macgregor (GM)	Head of Network Development	
Sandra Abraham (SA)	Head of Operations, Finance & Development	
Carmen Fuertes–Riestra (CFR)	Strategy, Planning & Performance Manager	
Clara Duval (CD)	Business Support Coordinator (minute-taker)	

Apologies

Will Pett (WP)	Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research & Insight	
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No.	Agenda Item	Action Lead
1.1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair opened the formal public session of the Committee. Apologies were noted from Will Pett (WP).</p>	
1.2	<p>Declarations of Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>Louise reported her appointment to the NHS England Board of 1 September, which had been registered with CQC and Healthwatch declarations. She confirmed she had stepped down from her Sussex role.</p> <p>The Chair and members offered congratulations, noting the importance of having a strong patient voice at national level.</p>	
1.3	<p>Minutes and Actions from previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2025 were approved.</p> <p>Updates to action(s) were as follows:</p> <p>There were no actions requiring an update.</p>	
1.4	<p>Chair's Report</p> <p>The Chair reported on visits to local Healthwatch in Essex and Dorset. Both demonstrated determination to represent the patient voice and sought guidance on securing their future, particularly regarding research and commissioning. Concerns were raised about separating social care from health care responsibilities, despite ambitions for integrated care.</p> <p>Dorset Healthwatch had proactively worked across ICS boundaries, presenting a possible model for others. Encouragingly, local teams reported continued enthusiasm, staff stability, and increasing volunteer engagement. Members noted that variation across areas was significant, and local authorities were still considering commissioning intentions.</p> <p>The committee noted the update.</p>	

No.	Agenda Item	Action Lead
1.5	<p>Chief Executive’s Report: Louise Ansari (LA)</p> <p>LA presented her report, highlighting that since the Dash review and NHS Long Term Plan, Healthwatch had entered a period of transition and uncertainty. Despite this, the executive team had revised the risk register, re-forecast budgets, and reviewed the business plan.</p> <p>Our work continues to influence national policy, including notable research on trans people’s access to GP services, which had been commended by the Secretary of State at a national LGBT health conference.</p> <p>LA outlined ongoing engagement with DHSC and supporting the design of the new Directorate of Patient Experience to ensure design principles for the successor arrangements, such as bottom-up insight, transparency, and independence, were embedded.</p> <p>Committee members expressed deep disappointment at the government’s decision to close Healthwatch, stressing the abolition of independent voice would be a serious loss. They highlighted risks of losing skills, trust, and the ability to reach seldom-heard groups. There was, however, recognition that our role now was to ensure Healthwatch’s legacy and principles were carried forward into the new system. The committee agreed on the need to support staff morale during this period.</p> <p>The Chair thanked LA and committee noted the update.</p>	
1.6	<p>Committee Member’s Reports</p> <p>Nothing to report.</p>	
1.7	<p>Audit, Finance and Risk Sub-Committee Update - July Budget 2025/26: Jane Laughton (JL)</p> <p>JL reported on the Subcommittee’s July meeting. Work had progressed on the risk register and assurance framework.</p>	

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	<p>Financial stewardship was noted as strong, with last year's budget delivered precisely on target. The current year was on track, though future funding remained uncertain. The Subcommittee would continue monitoring the change process and clarify its role relative to the main committee.</p> <p>The committee noted that while members who are not part of the AFRSC subcommittee may attend an AFRSC meeting by invitation of the AFRSC Chair, they are encouraged to attend the AFRSC subcommittee meetings where possible, as much of the finance and risk details will be considered in that forum.</p> <p>The Chair thanked JL, and the committee noted the update</p>	
1.8	<p>Forward Plan (Private Committee Meeting): Chair</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the forward plan of agenda items. committee requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future workshops cover strategic objectives during the transition. • Local Healthwatch continuity (including risks if contracts are not renewed). • A summary of support being provided to staff and the network to pass on to successor bodies. • There was also interest in continuing to review research and policy outputs, though the balance of time would increasingly shift to transition and legacy planning. <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GM to prepare a paper for November on the position of local Healthwatch contracts, highlighting risks and red flags. • LA to propose workshop sessions capturing lessons learned, support to staff and network, and transition design principles. • Committee members to suggest additional workshop topics to Sandra for inclusion on the Forward plan agenda. 	<p>Gavin</p> <p>Louise</p> <p>Committee Members</p>
	<p>Questions from the public</p> <p>No questions were raised.</p>	

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	<p>AOB</p> <p>No further items were raised. The Chair closed the meeting by stressing the importance of carrying forward Healthwatch's values and legacy while supporting staff through the period of uncertainty.</p>	
	<p>The Chair concluded the public meeting.</p>	

Scroll down for the Actions.

HEALTHWATCH ENGLAND PRIVATE COMMITTEE MEETING – ACTION LOG

22 September 2025

AGENDA ITEM	LEAD	ACTION	UPDATE	DEADLINE	STATUS
Item 1.8 – Forward Plan	Gavin MacGregor	Prepare a paper for November on the position of local Healthwatch contracts, highlighting risks and red flags.	This has been added to the agenda for the next Private Committee Meeting in November.	17 November 2025	Complete – to be presented to committee on 24 Nov
	Louise Ansari	Propose workshop sessions capturing lessons learned, support to staff and network, and transition design principles.	The next committee workshop on the 7 October will cover two policy presentations: Men’s Health and Virtual trust, the process on support to staff and Support for the network.	Sept 2025 (next workshop 7 October)	Complete
	Committee Member	Suggest additional workshop topics to Sandra for inclusion on the Forward plan agenda.	Chair and committee suggested several agenda items which has now been	November 2025	Complete

AGENDA ITEM	LEAD	ACTION	UPDATE	DEADLINE	STATUS
			added to December workshop agenda for discussion.		
AOB	Ben Knox	BK to send committee State of Patient Experience report	State of the Patient Experience report was sent to committee on the 30 Sept 2025	September 2025	Complete