



## Member of the Board of Trustees: role profile

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### About Healthwatch Essex

Healthwatch Essex is an award-winning charity that aims to be '*an independent voice for the people of Essex, helping to shape and improve local health and social care services*'. As a young and innovative organisation, with powers and responsibilities set in law, we have a vital role to play in helping to change the future of health and social care. We will do this by making sure that the voice and lived experience of all people in Essex is taken account of by the people who commission and deliver local NHS and social care services.

We are a team of around fifteen professionals, who, alongside a thriving network of volunteers, undertake work that includes engaging the public in innovative and effective ways (such as through films, podcasts and engagement projects) as well as carrying out high-quality social research. We also provide a telephone- and web-based Information Service to help the public access and understand the NHS and social care services. Above all, we aim to influence the decisions made by local health and social care authorities. Our success depends on building constructive partnerships with the NHS, local councils, and voluntary and community organisations.

Our ambition is to be an effective agent of local change, and to reflect the highest standards of national and international best practice. We also anticipate future growth as an organisation, and have recently created a new trading subsidiary, *HWE Insights*, to help us to do this.

The charity was created as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, and the Government's aim of 'putting patients and the public first' through strengthening their collective voice. The Act created a national network of local Healthwatch organisations, as well as a national umbrella organisation, Healthwatch England. The Act also gives local Healthwatch organisations certain powers in law to carry out their role, as well as certain obligations.

Following a governance review, and constitutional changes that took effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, we are seeking to appoint new members to the Board of Trustees. If you think you've got what it takes to be involved, and can offer clear oversight and direction, we'd love to hear from you.

For more information about Healthwatch Essex, visit [www.healthwatchessex.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchessex.org.uk), or contact the CEO Dr Tom Nutt on 01376 572829 or [deborah.potticary@healthwatchessex.org.uk](mailto:deborah.potticary@healthwatchessex.org.uk).

## **What is the role of the Board of Trustees?**

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees (whose members can be known variously as Charity Trustees or Directors<sup>1</sup>) to make sure that Healthwatch Essex (HWE) is solvent, well-run, and meeting the needs for which it has been set up. In particular, the Board must make sure that the day-to-day operational decisions and activities of HWE comply with both the relevant legislation (such as the Companies Acts and Charities Acts, as well as the Health and Social Care Act 2012) and that they advance HWE's own charitable purpose and objects.<sup>2</sup>

## **Composition of the Board of Trustees**

The Articles of Association of HWE provide for a Board of up to eight members. There are currently five members, who were appointed variously between 2012 and 2013. Their current term of office runs from April 2016 for three years.

Unlike many other Boards, the process for appointing new members onto the HWE Board is unusual, recognising our unique role as a voice for the people of Essex. Our Articles require that at least five members of the Board must be appointed via an Independent Panel, whilst also affording the current Board the right to co-opt additional members up to the maximum eight members.

Following a review of governance, including an audit of the Board's existing knowledge, skills and experience, the Board have indicated that they would welcome applications from all individuals with exceptional qualities who can add value to the governance of HWE, and who may have specialisms or experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Research, such as in a university or similar setting;
- PR/Communications;
- Commerce/enterprise;
- Finance;
- Change management.

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<sup>1</sup> Healthwatch Essex is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales, company number 8360699. It is also a registered charity, number 1158356. HWE Insights is a company limited by shares and wholly owned by Healthwatch Essex. It is registered in England and Wales, company number 9989317. The registered office for both companies is: RCCE House, Threshelfords Business Park, Inworth Road, Feering, Essex CO5 9SE.

<sup>2</sup> As set out in the Articles of Association, the Charity's objects are 'the advancement of health and the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, or financial hardship by: (1) Providing information and advice to the general public about local health and social care services. (2) Making the views and experiences of members of the general public known to health and social care providers. (3) Enabling local people to have a voice in the development, delivery and equality of access to local health and care services and facilities. (4) Providing training and the development of skills for volunteers and the wider community in understanding, scrutinising, reviewing and monitoring local health and care services and facilities.'

## **Trustees' individual responsibilities**

The role of HWE Trustees can be summarised as follows:

- To take part in setting, implementing and monitoring HWE's day-to-day and strategic objectives and operating practices, including the budget.
- To monitor the performance of HWE to make sure it complies with constitutional, statutory, regulatory and contractual obligations.
- To take all reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.
- To ensure that financial judgments and estimates are reasonable and prudent, and that suitable accounting policies are applied consistently.
- To receive, read and consider reports, and question these where necessary to ensure that decisions are well founded.
- To ensure that decisions taken by the Board are in the best interest of HWE and that its legal, financial and other responsibilities are met.
- To attend Board meetings, sub-committee meetings, working groups and training events, and to take part in discussions and decision making on a regular basis.
- To offer advice and expertise to the Board.
- To contribute to, and take collective responsibility for, decisions of the Board.
- To undertake special tasks and/or responsibilities as prescribed by the Board or one of its sub-committees, such as representing HWE at meetings and external events.
- To commit to HWE's approach towards valuing diversity and equal opportunities through its service delivery, activities and employment.
- To declare any relevant personal, professional or commercial interests in any matters being discussed by the Board.
- To uphold HWE's code of conduct and maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity.
- To respect the confidentiality of information, particularly where its release would compromise the interests of HWE or breach its statutory, regulatory, contractual and/or other requirements.
- To be responsible (collectively, with the Board) for the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer.

The minimum time commitment for Trustees will be 4 to 6 hours a month, to cover attendance at quarterly Board meetings, reading of papers, email and other correspondence, and attendance at other relevant meetings and events.

### **Knowledge, skills, attributes and experience**

Trustees are expected to make both a collective and an individual contribution to the work of the Board. As such, Trustees would be expected to possess (or be willing to acquire) the following knowledge, skills, attributes and experience:

- A commitment to advancing the interests of patients, service users and the public within the changing landscape of health and social care. This should include an awareness of, or an interest in, the potential for using evidence of people's 'voice' and lived experience to drive change.
- A perspective on issues and challenges facing the health and social care system, and an ability to employ a balanced consideration of this when making decisions affecting HWE. Your knowledge or experience of this may be in a professional, unpaid, non-executive or personal capacity.
- Strategic awareness, in order to make decisions in the best interests of Healthwatch Essex, taking into account manifold factors such as HWE's general legal and financial operating environment, HWE's particular statutory powers and obligations and the complex environment of health and social care commissioning, provision and scrutiny in Essex, and the requirements and expectations placed upon HWE.
- Excellent critical skills and business awareness, in order to inform the day-to-day operational and strategic management of HWE.
- Financial awareness, in order to play a lead role in overseeing HWE's effective financial management.
- Excellent communication skills, including a capability to play an active role at meetings, contributing to discussions and informing Board-level decisions. You will also potentially be communicating with a range of different individuals, from senior officials within health and social care to members of the public, so you must be willing to engage widely with people from all walks of life.
- A sound knowledge of charity and corporate governance.
- In addition:
  - As a Trustee of Healthwatch Essex, you will be a public representative of an organisation with statutory powers and obligations, and you should have a good idea of what is expected from a position of civic responsibility.

- You should be open-minded and inclusive, and committed to the principles of diversity and equal opportunity.

## **Eligibility**

Subject to the following exclusions, we would welcome applications from people who believe they could make a significant and effective contribution to the governance of HWE. The Board have set the following exclusions:

- Senior employees within health or social care commissioner and provider organisations, whose main function is the provision of services to the people of Essex;
- County councillors and district councillors who hold an executive position in their council.

Disclosure & Barring Service (formerly Criminal Record Bureau) checks will be required for Trustees-designate. If these raise issues about suitability, the Board may take them into account when deciding whether to confirm appointment. References will also be sought.

## **Tenure**

Trustees are appointed for a three-year term of office, which can be renewed if they and the other Trustees agree, but no Trustee may service more than three consecutive terms of office.

## **Payment**

The role is unpaid, but all reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

*Healthwatch Essex is committed to providing equal opportunities in the recruitment, training and development of its employees and volunteers.*

Thomas Nutt, CEO, HWE  
30<sup>th</sup> January 2017