

Customer Care Standard – Making every contact count:

Policy

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HwH) value all customers, internal and external, and have set standards and behaviours that we will follow in dealing with our customers. Our staff have been trained and are signed up to following these standards.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers of HwH.

HwH has identified the following groups of people as being customers (this list is not exhaustive):

External Customers:

- Public
- Service users
- Board and Company members
- Stakeholders
- Partner Organisations
- Other professionals
- Our commissioners

Internal Customers:

- Anyone within the organisation – colleagues and Board members

As part of our commitment to you, we have:

- Set standards which are user friendly, customer focused and measurable
- Trained staff in how to deal with customers and encouraged customer focussed behaviours which reflect our core values to be:
 - Compassionate & promote equality
 - Influential
 - Credible
 - Independent
 - Supportive
- Set targets which will be reviewed regularly at appraisals

- Given consideration to legislation, good practice and national standards
- Ensured staff are equipped to deliver services taking into account equality, diversity and inclusion

We will:

- Ensure our goals exceed the expectations of all our customer groups
- Communicate in a professional manner
- Hold ourselves and each other accountable for our customer service commitment
- Ensure our staff are trained, competent and effective to deliver our services
- Ensure all staff receive an appropriate level of training in Customer Care required for their role
- Regularly ask our customers for feedback about our customer service
- Use this feedback to improve the services we deliver

What you can expect

We will be:

- Courteous, helpful, open and honest in delivering high quality services
- Professional and positive in our approach
- Well-informed, so that we are able to help you where possible
- Effective in listening and responding to you when you are dissatisfied or complain
- Equitable and fair in the way we treat our customers, meeting the needs of people with special requirements whenever possible and creative in our approaches to achieve this

When you have contact with us, we will:

- Aim to answer the query at the first point of contact
- Aim to respond to your telephone call promptly

- Arrange for someone to call you back if we cannot answer your query immediately
- Provide clear and up to date information on the organisation's website
- Aim to respond to your letters and emails in a prompt and timely manner
- Arrange an appointment if necessary for you to speak to someone who can help you
- Show you an identity badge when we visit your building
- Use plain English that is clear and easy to understand

We would like you to:

- Treat our staff with courtesy, respect and dignity
- Keep any appointments that you have with us, and notify us if you are unable to attend
- Give us the information we need to help you
- Give us your views and suggestions to help us improve our services

Unreasonable Behaviour

HwH will follow this policy in conjunction with its internal Unreasonable Behaviour Guidance document for HwH staff. HwH reserves the right to make an assessment as and when needed to put in place limitations on communication between the customer and the organisation. In the first instance, this will be discussed between the staff member and the customer, but if no solution can be reached then it will be escalated to the Chief Executive.

If you would like to see our Unreasonable Behaviour Guidance document, you can request this via any of the contact methods listed elsewhere in this policy.

Customer service standards

General Principles – When dealing with an enquiry:

When dealing with an enquiry from a customer, whether face to face or by telephone we will:

- Greet customers in a polite and courteous manner
- Take ownership of the call, resolving the customer's enquiry wherever possible
- Actively listen to the enquiry

- Ensure that the nature of the customer's enquiry is understood clearly and recorded
- Ensure the customer is treated with respect and treat the enquiry with objectivity, empathy and diplomacy
- Aim to resolve the majority of enquiries at the first point of contact and to meet our customer care standards
- Ensure customer expectations are managed and provide regular progress updates where appropriate including expected response times

Telephone calls (including signposting enquiries)

We will:

- Aim to respond to your telephone call within five working days and normally within 2-3 working days
- Take ownership of the call and resolve the customer's enquiry at the point of contact where possible
- Listen to all messages within two working days and deal with them appropriately

Letters

We will:

- Respond to general enquiries received via letters within 2 weeks (10 working days)
- Letters must be sent on official HwH headed paper and signed virtually by the appropriate person
- Respond using plain English and avoid using jargon and acronyms
- Refer to the Complaints Policy and follow the associated process for any correspondence that is a complaint (if in doubt liaise with the Complaints Manager)

Signposting via letter

We will:

- Send an acknowledgement letter within 7 working days
- Send a full response within 15 working days
- Follow procedures and processes for signposting handling

Emails

We will:

- Respond to emails within 5 working days
- Ensure the presentation of emails is easy to understand, professional and accurate
- Confirm receipt of allocated signposting cases via info@ (refer to Info@ Management Process)
- Use out of office messages with expected return dates as appropriate

I can confirm I have read and understood and will follow the Healthwatch Hertfordshire Customer Care Standards – Making every contact count: Policy.

Signature.....

Job Title

Date

Reviewed and signed off at Healthwatch Hertfordshire Board meeting on:

21st February 2023