

Volunteering Policy

Introduction

Volunteers support Healthwatch Hertfordshire by giving their time, skills and expertise without any expectation of financial compensation beyond reimbursement of expenses. Healthwatch Hertfordshire aims to meet the volunteers' expectations in terms of skills learned, experience gained or other motivation. Volunteers may provide additional support that enhances a service or that enables the organisation to do things it would not normally be able to do. Volunteers will not be used to replace paid staff.

In summary volunteers can:

- help us reflect and strengthen links with Hertfordshire's communities
- help us engage with harder to reach communities
- bring diversity which enriches the organisation
- bring a range of qualities, skills and expertise that we may not have in the staff team. For example, languages, cultural understanding, specialist skills and personal experiences
- empower members of the community
- increase capacity so that we can achieve more

Volunteers will be valued members of the Healthwatch team and can expect the following:

- to get something from the role for themselves
- to know how they are being selected and what we expect from them
- to know what will happen if things go wrong
- to not be out of pocket
- to be trained appropriately
- to have safe working conditions and be insured
- to be free from discrimination on any grounds

In turn, we expect that Volunteers will:

- demonstrate commitment and reliability to tasks set, as set out in the role description
- carry out tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the organisation
- respect confidentiality
- follow the organisation's procedures and standards, including health and safety and equal opportunities, in relation to its staff, volunteers and the public.
- attend training and support sessions if these are an agreed part of the role

- let Healthwatch Hertfordshire know if there are problems

The agreement between the volunteer and Healthwatch Hertfordshire is not intended to be a legally binding contract and may be cancelled at any time by either party. The agreement does not imply the creation of an employment relationship.

1. Recruitment

Healthwatch Hertfordshire recognises the benefit that volunteers can bring to an organisation and this is reflected by the variety of roles they perform. However, the nature of the organisation's relationship with volunteers is very different to the one it has with paid employees.

The Volunteering Recruitment Process clearly sets out all the steps that Healthwatch Hertfordshire follows and covers:

- Role Descriptions
- Advertisements
- How we recruit
- The Volunteering Information Pack
- The application process including DBS checks
- The meeting/interview process
- Induction and Information
- Learning and Development
- Communication, supervision and support

2. Equality and Diversity Policy

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. We are committed to maintaining an organisation in which different ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued and where all have the opportunity to participate and contribute.

Please refer to [Appendix 1](#)
[Healthwatch Hertfordshire: Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

3. Expenses

Healthwatch Hertfordshire will cover all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses that are incurred in order to volunteer. The amount claimed should be reasonable but not excessive.

These can include:

- travel to and from the place where they are volunteering
- travel while carrying out volunteering
- any post and phone costs connected with volunteering

At induction, volunteers will receive guidance on Healthwatch Hertfordshire's Expenses Policy and how to submit claims.

Receipts and any other documents should be kept to verify expenses being claimed.

Recipients will be required to confirm that expenses and any claim for payment meet the rules set out in the Guidance for Healthwatch Hertfordshire.

In particular, for mileage claims confirmation of the following will be required:

- that the recipient holds a current driving licence
- that the vehicle has a valid MOT certificate (if required), and
- that the vehicle is fully insured and the insurance cover includes Healthwatch Hertfordshire volunteering activity.

[Please refer to Appendix 2
Healthwatch Hertfordshire: Expenses Policy](#)

4. Insurance

Healthwatch Hertfordshire has insurance policies that cover all volunteers in carrying out their roles (except in relation to vehicle insurance - see above).

Employer's Liability Insurance

The Healthwatch Hertfordshire Employer's Liability Insurance also provides cover for its volunteers. So, if a volunteer was injured in the course of volunteering for Healthwatch Hertfordshire, and the injury was due to the negligence of its employees / other volunteers, they could make a claim under the employer's liability insurance.

Public liability

Should a member of the public be injured, or their property damaged because of an incident in which a volunteer has been negligent then the member of the public may claim compensation under the public liability insurance.

5. Health and Safety

Volunteers are included in the Healthwatch Hertfordshire Health and Safety policy. Each volunteer role has been risk assessed and measures taken to address any risks identified, for example, extra training and / or supervision. The risk assessments are reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect current practice. Health and Safety information and details of risks and mitigations will be shared with volunteers, as relevant to their roles.

Whilst volunteering, the volunteer needs to know who to report any incident to at the organisation where they are volunteering, where the first aid box is located, who they should go to if they have an accident, the fire evacuation procedure and what the organisation's attitude is to the health and safety of its staff, volunteers and those it supports.

During the pandemic and beyond we will ensure that volunteers are not put in potentially harmful situations and we will be risk averse in our assessments. Where volunteers are able to partake in activity there may be additional precautions that need to be taken in line with current government guidance and best practice.

A copy of the full Healthwatch Hertfordshire Health and Safety Policy is available on request.

6. Whistleblowing

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is committed to working effectively together to create a culture which is open and transparent. A culture in which individuals are supported to report concerns and safety issues, and are treated fairly, with empathy and consideration, when they have been involved in an incident or have raised a concern.

The Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure document sets out the procedure that staff, volunteers and board members of Healthwatch Hertfordshire can use to raise a concern about dangerous, illegal or improper activity (whistle blowing). No Healthwatch Hertfordshire member of staff, volunteer and board member will be disadvantaged in any way because of whistle blowing

Please refer to [Appendix 3](#)
[Healthwatch Hertfordshire: Whistle Blowing Policy & Procedure](#)

7. Issue Resolution

Inappropriate Behaviour and Complaints

From time to time situations may occur where concerns are raised about the behaviour of a volunteer. Most concerns of this nature can be easily dealt with informally in a 1:1 meeting between the volunteer and the appropriate Volunteer Lead Officer. There may be a number of reasons for the inappropriate behaviour including: the volunteer not realising they are doing anything wrong, a training need, not enough support in their role, problems at home which affect their performance, a need for a change of duties or more variety in the work they do.

Should the concerns be more serious and a resolution is not found then Healthwatch Hertfordshire does have a problem solving procedure that can be

used by the organisation so that any issues can be raised and problems dealt with in a consistent way.

Volunteers are welcome to request sight of this process, which forms part of our internal procedures. If required please contact Nuray Ercan, Head of Governance & Operations.

8. Conflict of Interest

It is often to the organisation's benefit that volunteers come with their own experiences of health and social care services but there may be occasions where particular volunteering activity might not be appropriate for certain individuals. Any conflict of interest needs to be declared and discussed at an early stage so that Healthwatch Hertfordshire can prevent it from being a barrier to them taking up suitable volunteering opportunities. Equally if a volunteer finds a Healthwatch Hertfordshire approach is a concern, they should raise it within the organisation. Volunteers are expected to make an appropriate declaration when they sign up to the Healthwatch Hertfordshire Volunteer Agreement.

9. Confidentiality

All staff, volunteers and others who work at Healthwatch Hertfordshire must respect the need for confidentiality of information held about anyone who comes into contact with Healthwatch Hertfordshire and about any Healthwatch Hertfordshire business. This is expected to continue even when contact has ceased with this person.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Healthwatch Hertfordshire's Data Protection Policy.

[Please refer to Appendix 4](#)

[Healthwatch Hertfordshire: Confidentiality Policy](#)

10. Data Protection

Information held about volunteers must comply with the [General Data Protection Regulation 2018 \(GDPR\)](#). The volunteer has a right to request access to and be given copies of any information that the organisation holds about them.

[Please refer to Appendix 5](#)

[Healthwatch Hertfordshire: Data Protection Policy](#)

11. Agreeing to the Volunteering Policy

This Volunteering Policy and guidance is freely accessible to all. The content is reviewed every two years, and updated to reflect any administrative or legislative changes as required.

Volunteers will be required to sign to indicate that they have received, read and understood the content of this guidance on completion of the briefing and induction process. It is your personal responsibility to follow it.

Acceptance of Volunteering Policy

All Volunteers are required to sign to indicate that they have received, read and understood the content of this guidance as set out in the Volunteer Handbook and on completion of the volunteer induction process. It is your responsibility to follow it.

Policy/procedure/guidance	Volunteer Initials/signature	Date
Equality & Diversity		
Expenses		
Insurance		
Health and Safety		
Whistleblowing		
Issue Resolution		
Conflict of Interest		
Confidentiality		
Data Protection		

I (Name of Volunteer) confirm that I have read and understood the content of this guidance and the following policies referred to therein:

Signature of Volunteer

Date:

Reviewed and signed off at the Healthwatch Hertfordshire Board meeting on:

Date:

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Signed by Nuray Ercan, Company Secretary