

# Volunteer handbook

**healthwatch**  
County Durham



# Hello and welcome

# Welcome to Healthwatch Durham



We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer with Healthwatch County Durham. Volunteers are central to our work and we can't be effective without you. The aim of this Volunteer Handbook is to give you some background to who we are and what we do, an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of our volunteers and a summary of the policies and procedures we have in place to support and protect you.

These policies and procedures also ensure we maintain the highest possible standards in meeting our legal responsibilities and ensuring Healthwatch County Durham provides a consistently high level of support to those in our communities who use health and Social Care services - now and in the future.

# A little bit about us



The Government's Health and Social Care Act (2012) established Healthwatch as the new 'independent consumer champion' for adults and children who use health and social care services. Its aim in establishing Healthwatch is to 'achieve the best health and care services that are shaped by local needs and experiences.

Healthwatch has two distinct parts: **Healthwatch** England and **local** Healthwatch.

Healthwatch England is a statutory committee of the Care Quality Commission who regulates and inspect health and social care services so local Healthwatch can raise issues of concern directly with them, if they have serious concerns. Healthwatch England provides advice, guidance and support to local Healthwatch and receives an annual report from each local Healthwatch.

Every Healthwatch is **commissioned** in each area by the local Council, who provide the funding for Healthwatch from a central Government pot.

"I really enjoyed working with Healthwatch, hopefully we can collaborate again in the future"-Partner organisation

\*See appendices for further background information on Healthwatch County Durham.

# A little bit about you

We have thousands of volunteers across Healthwatch nationally. Volunteers get involved for a variety of reasons. Some want to make a positive difference to the lives of people, others want to develop new skills and some simply want to meet new people and have fun. We don't have a typical volunteer.

Every person who volunteers for us does have one thing in common: they're absolutely vital to our work.

"I'm really enjoying acquiring new knowledge and using this with the Healthwatch team"-Research Volunteer



# What you can expect from us

We want to make sure that you enjoy your role and get the most out of it.

Our commitment to our volunteers, we will:

- Always treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation
- Ensure you have a clear idea of your responsibilities, including the length of time we'd like you to be involved in a project
- Give you information about the training and support available to help you carry out your role
- Provide you with support through regular meetings or discussions (depending on your role)
- Offer you fair, honest and timely feedback on your work
- Update you on how your work has made a difference.

\*See appendices for full Volunteer Charter and Volunteer Policy.



# Roles

Volunteers will support the engagement work of Healthwatch County Durham by channelling the views of local people and telling us what matters to people who use health and social care services.

They will be committed to improving health and social care services and be willing to support and promote the work of Healthwatch, in their community and sometimes beyond.

Quote “I am in a position to see what really happens, because of my voluntary work, and I definitely believe in Healthwatch making a difference to people”-Volunteer

They will also make people aware of the Healthwatch Information and Signposting service, which supports and guides people through difficulties they may be having ,with regard to Health and social care services.

Please note as a volunteer you may wish to undertake several roles or you may choose only to carry out certain roles and/or specialise in particular areas where you have specific skills or have special interest.

\*See appendices for specific volunteer role descriptions



# What we expect from you



We expect high standards from all our volunteers.

To ensure you get the most out of your role, please try to do the following:

- Always treat Healthwatch staff, supporters and fellow volunteers with respect, consideration and appreciation
- Act in a professional way whenever you represent Healthwatch in public
- Act in a way that doesn't discriminate against or exclude anyone
- Provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to fulfil your volunteering commitment, or if you no longer wish to be involved in a project
- If you don't fully understand your role and responsibilities, please ask your Volunteer supporter for guidance.

# We'll support you

“When meeting strangers its sometimes difficult, as I don't know how they will respond”-engagement Volunteer

**Induction:** -Your Healthwatch contact will introduce you to your team and anyone else you might be working with. They'll also go over Health and safety requirements. Please use this opportunity to ask any questions and to highlight any areas you would like further training and support in. If you'll be volunteering with us over a period of time, we recommend a settling in period which gives us both a chance to assess how things are working out.

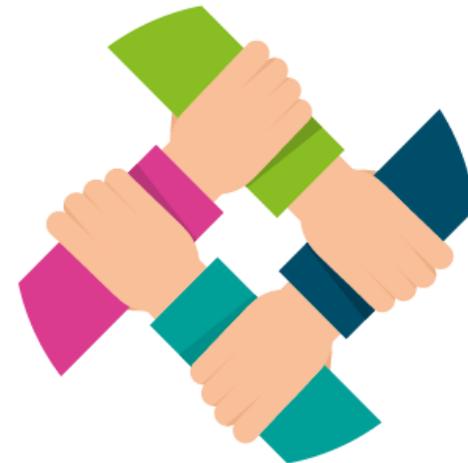
**Training:** - We want to ensure that you feel happy and confident to carry out your role. As a Healthwatch volunteer you will be offered training and your volunteer supporter will try to source specific training you have identified, that will help you do this.

**Reliability and Commitment:**-It's very important that you're reliable and you stick to any arrangements you've made with us. If your circumstances change, please let your Healthwatch supporter know as soon as possible.

If you're planning to go on holiday, please let your Healthwatch supporter know that you'll be unavailable for certain dates and when you plan to return.

**Support:**-As part of your development, please make a note of how each task you carried out went, what you did and if there were any issues that arose. Most volunteers will have a review meeting and the frequency of these will vary depending on the nature of your role and your time commitment.

The review meeting, in person or by phone, will focus on how the role is going, what support you need and, if necessary update you on what's happening at Healthwatch. It should be an opportunity for volunteers and staff to raise issues and for you to talk constructively about your involvement with us.



# The Essentials

As a volunteer, you'll need to be aware of the following policies and procedures. Please take a few minutes to have a good read through and familiarise yourself with them.

## Expenses

Healthwatch will reimburse volunteers for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Volunteers are required to complete expenses forms each month, these are available electronically or in hard copy and **must be submitted by the 10th of each month.**

For travel costs you are required to keep bus fare receipts and when using your own car you must note the mileage travelled on your form which will be paid in line with the £0.45 per mile adopted by PCP. Any associated parking receipts must also be submitted.

If volunteering four hours or more in one session, meal costs, up to the value of £5.00 can be claimed with a copy of receipts.

\*See appendices for Volunteer Expenses Policy

## Gifts

Giving or receiving gifts may give the impression of favouritism and could raise expectations of the level of support you can provide in your role. As such, we ask that volunteers don't

## Health and Safety

Healthwatch is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works for us, on our premises or uses our services. This commitment equally applies to our large team of volunteers who are vital to the services we provide.

Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the same health and safety legislative requirements as those carried out by Healthwatch employees. It's therefore important that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards in order to provide a safe working environment for all.

It's important that you:

- Carry out your duties without endangering either your own health and safety, or that of colleagues, third parties and/or the general public.
- Comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to safety and follow guidance provided by Healthwatch.
- Inform your Healthwatch contact of any personal health and safety requirements that you have.

\*See appendices for Health and Safety Policy Statement.

# The Essentials

## Working Alone

Healthwatch is committed to caring for the safety of staff, volunteers and clients. They have a legal responsibility to provide safe and secure working environment for staff, volunteers and clients. All volunteers are required to work within these procedures.

\*See appendices for 'Procedure for Healthwatch Volunteers working alone'.

## Accidents/Incidents and Insurance

All accidents and incidents must be reported to your Healthwatch contact as soon as possible. If you feel that it's a real emergency, please contact the emergency services immediately.

Registered volunteers aged 16 and over are covered by PCP's Personal Accident Insurance (further details available on request).

## Personal Safety and I.D. Cards

You will have provided us with an emergency contact (if not can you please do so), who we will contact in the unlikely event of an emergency. If it is required for your role, you'll be issued with a Healthwatch volunteer ID card which you should always have with you when carrying out your activities.

## Boundaries

Clear boundaries are important for staff, volunteers and service users. They enable us to carry out a service according to agreed expectations and ensures that everyone receives the same quality of service.

We realise that staff and volunteers may sometimes have contact with clients in a personal capacity-as friends, family or colleagues. In this situation, please take care to avoid any apparent conflict of interest.

# The Essentials

## Confidentiality

Volunteers must maintain confidentiality during their time with Healthwatch. For this reason, when you complete an application form you are also signing a confidentiality declaration. This means that confidential information about people we support, volunteers, Healthwatch staff and our work is kept private, unless sharing this information is required by law.

\*See appendices for Confidentiality Policy.

## DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service)

Healthwatch is involved in working with people in a wide variety of ways. If your role involves working with particular groups or individual people you may be required to undergo a DBS check as part of our policy on Safeguarding.

## Safeguarding

All Healthwatch volunteers are required to undergo safeguarding training as part of their induction process. This will equip you with the safeguarding skills to act appropriately and confidently to protect the children and vulnerable adults you come into contact with

\*See appendices for full DBS Policy and Safeguarding Adults and Children Procedure.

## Data Protection

Before we can collect, store, or use data about an individual, the law requires us to ensure that we have that individuals consent to do so. The way we do this is by making sure we work within our data protection policy/procedures. You may, in your work with us, have access to and handle the personal information of the people you are helping. It's vital that you are aware of our policy and procedure, please ask your Healthwatch contact for a copy of this, if it is required for your role.

\*See appendices for more Data Protection policy and procedure.

## Diversity

We are committed to a policy of treating all volunteers and volunteer applicants equally and fairly. We accept volunteers based on their suitability for the role. We won't discriminate against any volunteers because of their age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, political beliefs, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

\*See appendices for Equality and Diversity policy statement.

# The Essentials

## No Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted on Healthwatch property or when staff and volunteers are involved with Healthwatch activities.

## Car Drivers

It's important to note that if you're involved in an activity for Healthwatch that involves using your car, you must inform your own insurers. Most insurance companies agree to cover car journeys at no extra charge. We require all volunteers to check this with your own insurance company. Your car will not be covered by Healthwatch.

## How we talk

When you're volunteering for Healthwatch, you may notice that we use a certain style of language. The way we talk is important and our 'voice' is a key part of helping people understand who we are and what we do.

It's essential that we maintain one voice-one that's consistent, clear and easy to understand. Whether you're speaking on behalf of Healthwatch, drafting an email or writing a letter, it's well worth getting to grips with the Healthwatch 'tone of voice'. Your Healthwatch contact can support you with this.

## What we wear

As a volunteer for Healthwatch, you're also an ambassador for the organisation. You're responsible for presenting a positive image to visitors, clients and the community.

Please use your judgement to dress appropriately for the activities you're asked to carry out. We can provide a Healthwatch branded T-Shirt or polo shirt for you to wear while carrying out your duties. If you're ever unsure about what to wear, just ask your Healthwatch contact.



# Dealing with difficulties

“I do like to be involved and hear other people’s views. There’s always something new to learn”-research Volunteer

If you encounter a difficulty with any aspect of the role, please talk to your Healthwatch contact as soon as possible for advice and support.

If the role isn’t working out as hoped, please let your Healthwatch contact know. Together you should try to work out any difficulties. If it is agreed it can’t work, there is a procedure to follow.

\*See appendices for more information on ‘Performance and Dealing with Problems procedure’.

# Moving on & references

You can end your volunteer role with Healthwatch at any time. Please let your Volunteer Supporter know so that they can make alternative arrangements and we would like to have a chat with you about your reasons for leaving, although this is not mandatory.

If you have been a volunteer with us for over six months we can also supply you with a reference when requested.

# Complaints

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve the way we do things and provide a better service.

We have a complaints procedure and policy to ensure we capture all feedback. If you wish to make a complaint or you receive a complaint from someone about your service or anything to do with Healthwatch's work, please pass on to your Healthwatch contact.

\*See appendices for 'Complaints Policy'.

