

## **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is the independent consumer champion for health and social care, working to ensure local voices are able to influence the delivery and design of local services. Healthwatch Oxfordshire is an organisation which values the work of volunteers and the contribution they make to deliver our goals.

- 1.1 Volunteering is one way that local people are genuinely involved in our work and is supplementary to the work of paid staff and not seen as a substitute for it.
- 1.2 We want to work with people from Oxfordshire so that our health and social care services are the best they can be

### **2. What is a volunteer?**

A 'volunteer' is defined as someone who commits their time and energy for the benefit of others, they do so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward, except for the payment of actual out of pocket expenses. All volunteers have a valuable contribution to make to our work, will be listened to and offered a volunteering role that best suits their skills and expertise. There are many opportunities to volunteer with Healthwatch Oxfordshire these include:

- 2.1 Being a Healthwatch Ambassador by helping at events, research etc.
- 2.2 Becoming a Healthwatch Champion
- 2.3 Being an authorised Enter and View representative

### **3. Benefits of Volunteers**

The benefits to Healthwatch Oxfordshire of volunteers:

- 3.1 Volunteers can bring a perspective to our work that reflects the views of the local community
- 3.2 They bring credibility to Healthwatch Oxfordshire - giving their time for free suggests that the work we do is of value to the local population
- 3.3 Volunteers can help to extend services we currently offer
- 3.4 Members of the public are more likely to identify with members of their own community, particularly if those communities are seldom heard.

## **4. Benefits for Volunteers**

The benefits of volunteering with Healthwatch Oxfordshire include:

- 4.1 Providing people with new challenges and a chance to learn new skills
- 4.2 Volunteering can be a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities
- 4.3 By donating their time, volunteers can ‘give something back’ to health and social care in Oxfordshire
- 4.4 Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding
- 4.5 Volunteering can improve health and wellbeing!
- 4.6 After completion of 50 hours satisfactory voluntary work with Healthwatch Oxfordshire volunteers will be awarded a Certificate of Volunteering and may request a reference from Healthwatch Oxfordshire.
- 4.7 Meet new people with like-minded interests

## **5. Recruitment**

The Chief Executive of Healthwatch Oxfordshire will oversee the recruitment process for volunteers and may on occasion delegate this to a member of the Healthwatch Oxfordshire Team. Healthwatch Oxfordshire will recruit volunteers in a fair and accessible way by advertising opportunities as follows:

- 5.1 Healthwatch Oxfordshire website
- 5.2 Direct with our membership, through e-mail, post and newsletter
- 5.3 Through our partner organisations in the statutory sector
- 5.4 Through voluntary organisations
- 5.5 Through the use of social media such as Twitter, Facebook etc.
- 5.6 Through local media and radio

## **6. Selection Process**

People who want to volunteer with Healthwatch Oxfordshire will be asked to complete an application form and an Equal opportunity Form (which will be separated from your application once received). Applications will be reviewed and suitable applicants who meet the volunteering criteria will then be invited to attend an informal interview. The purpose of the interview is to:

- 6.1 Explain and discuss the voluntary opportunity and commitment involved
- 6.2 Verify the background information already supplied by the potential volunteer
- 6.3 Explore any relevant skills, interests and experiences which the potential volunteer may bring to the work

- 6.4 Assess whether the potential volunteer will be able to carry out the role description and what training or other assistance might be required in order to enable this.
- 6.5 The interview will be held at the volunteers' convenience in a confidential environment on a one to one basis. These are two way conversations to help decide if this is the right volunteering role for the applicant.
- 6.6 Potential volunteers will also be asked to provide details of two character references who know the person in either a work or social context. Acceptance as a volunteer with Healthwatch Oxfordshire will be subject to receipt of two satisfactory references. The two references, as well as a satisfactory clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service will be taken up prior to the start of any volunteer role. Having a criminal conviction will not automatically prevent you from volunteering, however, Healthwatch Oxfordshire will look at the nature of the conviction, your recent history and the type of volunteering you have applied for before making a decision.
- 6.7 If the application was not successful the Chief Executive of Healthwatch Oxfordshire will provide feedback on the reason why.
- 6.8 When someone has talents and skills which cannot be used well by Healthwatch Oxfordshire we will direct them to other organisations that may be able to suggest other volunteering opportunities.
- 6.9 If potential volunteers are unhappy with this decision they can appeal in writing to the Chair of Healthwatch Oxfordshire. The Chair will review the evidence and make the final decision. The Chair's decision is final.

## **7 Induction process**

All volunteers invited to take up a volunteering opportunity with Healthwatch Oxfordshire will go through the induction process. As part of the induction they will be given the opportunity to develop therefore all volunteers will be expected to complete a basic induction which will include:

- 7.1 About Healthwatch Oxfordshire, its background, vision and values
- 7.2 Overview of the health and social care sector in Oxfordshire
- 7.3 Policies and procedures applicable to their role e.g. Expenses policy
- 7.4 Standards of conduct expected from Healthwatch Oxfordshire Volunteers
- 7.5 The Nolan Principles (see *appendix 1*)

## **8 Training**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire will support its volunteers to develop their skills through its training programme which will include:

- 8.1 Safeguarding (at a level appropriate to the role)
- 8.2 Health and Safety
- 8.3 Equality and Diversity (at a level appropriate to the role)

- 8.4 Confidentiality
- 8.5 Complaints procedure
- 8.6 Expenses procedure
- 8.7 Data protection
- 8.8 Enter and View (authorised Enter and View Representative only)

## **9 Volunteer Rights**

Our volunteers can expect to:

- 9.1 Be given a Role Description outlining the tasks they may be asked to perform and the level of responsibility which goes with them
- 9.2 Be given clear information about the roles of volunteers and paid staff within Healthwatch Oxfordshire
- 9.3 Have out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed in line with our policy
- 9.4 Receive the same insurance cover as paid staff
- 9.5 Feel valued, supported and be treated with respect
- 9.6 Be made aware of our responsibility for Health & Safety, and have access to a copy of any Risk Assessments carried out
- 9.7 Express their concerns or grievances through our procedure

## **10 Volunteer responsibilities**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire expects its volunteers to:

- 10.1 Follow our policies, procedures and good practice guidelines
- 10.2 Not act in a way which would bring harm to the Healthwatch reputation
- 10.3 To treat with respect our Board, staff, other volunteers, visitors, the public, agencies and organisations we work with
- 10.4 Let the appointed person know if they are going to be late or unable to attend their agreed day/time
- 10.5 Give feedback about their role, development, training needs, concerns or worries.

## **11 Support and Supervision**

A member of staff at Healthwatch Oxfordshire will offer support to volunteers. They will have regular meetings with volunteers to discuss any problems, issues or training needs.

## **12 Insurance**

All volunteers are covered by the EASI Healthwatch CIC Insurance Policy.

## 13 Expenses

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All out-of-pocket expenses, if required, will be reimbursed including expenses for travel, and meals (if appropriate) and other pre authorised expenses. To claim expenses, a Volunteer Expenses form must be completed and submitted along with relevant receipts.

## 14 Resolving Problems

The relationship between Healthwatch Oxfordshire and our volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that we are able to maintain our high standards of quality and service, and it is also important that our volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to our service.

14.1 If volunteers have a complaint or grievance about our organisation, a member of staff, or another volunteer, we would encourage them to raise the issue informally in order to seek a speedy resolution. If the problem is about a member of the Healthwatch Oxfordshire staff then the volunteer should discuss it with the Chief Executive of Healthwatch Oxfordshire. If a resolution cannot be agreed then the volunteer must make a complaint using the relevant procedure.

14.2 If a volunteer does not meet with our organisations standards we will discuss this with them. If the problem is serious we may suspend the volunteer until a full investigation has been conducted. A serious problem may include violence, theft, abusive behaviour or acting in a way that is detrimental to the reputation of Healthwatch Oxfordshire.

14.3 Concerns about a volunteers' performance will be raised with them and they will be given the opportunity to improve. Should there be no improvement Healthwatch Oxfordshire may decide to ask the volunteer to leave immediately

14.4 If the volunteer is unhappy with this decision they may appeal to the Chair of the Healthwatch Oxfordshire Board within one week of the decision.

14.5 The Chair will make a decision within two weeks of receiving an appeal. The Chairs decision is final

## 15 Confidentiality

Healthwatch Oxfordshire has an explicit Confidentiality Policy that all members of our Board, staff, and volunteers must adhere to.

Date approved by the HWO Board	8/7/14
Responsible person	Chief Executive Officer
Review interval	Annual
Date of last review	

*(Appendix 1)*

## **The Nolan Principles**

The seven principles of public life were first published in 1995, and have become widely known as 'The Nolan Principles'. They are the general principles of conduct that underpin public life.

In carrying out the activities of Healthwatch Oxfordshire, all staff and volunteers will have regard to these principles and behave within them.

### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

### **Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

### **Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

### **Openness**

Holders of public office should be open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when they wider public interest clearly demands.

### **Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example