

Healthwatch Hillingdon

Volunteers Policy and Procedure

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1. Policy

1.1 Healthwatch Hillingdon (HWH) is a volunteer-led organisation, and volunteering lies at the heart of all that we do. We appreciate and rely on the range of experiences and skills that all our volunteers bring to this organisation. Our Volunteer Policy is written to ensure that all HWH volunteers understand what each brings to the whole, how we value that and how we can best work together to ensure our continued effectiveness.

2. Who we are

2.1 HWH exists to ensure that local people have a role to play in shaping and informing local services. We represent Hillingdon residents; and we need to be as representative of local views and experiences as possible.

2.2 Involving people from differing backgrounds, ages, cultures, genres and outlooks provides a greater pool of experiences for HWH, as well as helping to bring new ideas and fresh approaches to our work.

3. Statement of intent

3.1 We want to make sure that all our volunteers have the information and the support they need to carry out interesting, useful roles, effectively. We undertake to risk assess roles and environment to safeguard volunteers in their roles. A small team of staff are employed to support the activities and plans developed by HWH volunteers, and these staff members work to an annual and strategic plan agreed by the Board. We believe the opportunities offered by HWH are rewarding and interesting, and offer real opportunities to change and improve health and social care in this Borough where necessary. It is important to us that we make a difference to local services; and we are committed to providing the support, encouragement and structures that enable our volunteers to make that difference a reality.

4. Our commitment to volunteers

4.1 HWH volunteers have important roles to play in our borough that can sometimes be politically sensitive. Each volunteer will be given a clear description of their role and responsibilities so that it is clear what can be undertaken in the name of HWH. Volunteers will be formally recruited and interviewed, and references will be sought. Some volunteers will be asked to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check if their role requires it, so that we can ensure we safeguard vulnerable people with whom that volunteer may come into contact. All volunteers will automatically be registered as members of HWH, and all will be provided with the training needed to carry out their roles effectively.

- 4.2 All volunteers will be asked to subscribe to the policies and procedures of HWH. Particularly emphasis is placed on the Volunteers Code of Conduct Policy (HWH020), to ensure that volunteers treat each other, other residents and services with equal respect at all times, and value the richness of experience that diversity brings to HWH and its work.
- 4.3 We understand that from time to time a volunteer may not be entirely satisfied with their volunteering experience. Volunteers in the first instance should raise their issues and concerns with the Volunteer Coordinator and if they feel that matters have not been resolved satisfactorily, a complaints procedure that volunteers can follow is published on our website (Complaints Policy and Procedure - HWH008).
- 4.4 Refugees and Asylum seekers are welcomed in HWH. Take up of roles will depend on safeguarding measures we can take, to ensure the safety of vulnerable residents. The personal safety of all our volunteers is also a key concern of HWH and we undertake to risk assess roles and volunteer environments to ensure safe practice.
- 4.5 Volunteer's personal information is secured under the Data Protection Act (Data Protection Policy and Procedure - HWH006), and HWH undertakes to treat personal information with strict confidentiality. At the same time, HWH requires that volunteers treat the information they receive during their duties with equally strict confidentiality and do not discuss HWH matters and issues with anyone other than HWH members.
- 4.6 HWH does not believe that volunteers should be out of pocket as a result of volunteering with us, and therefore we reimburse travel expenses - and provide lunch expenses for those who volunteer for longer than four hours at one stretch - as long as expense claims are supported with receipts (Volunteers Expenses and Benefits Policy - HWH014).
- 4.7 HWH believes in a culture of continuous improvement. We promote this approach to partner agencies when we identify elements of their services that could be improved. Likewise, we regard feedback as a way of learning from our volunteers and improving our organisation and would encourage volunteers to share their views with us on their volunteering experience.
- 4.8 Volunteers are not employed by HWH and should not consider this to be a contract of employment.
- 4.9 HWH will endeavour to understand the potential effect of its policies and practices on volunteers, particularly those from 'protected' characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 section 149.