

CODE OF CONDUCT

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is committed to having a working atmosphere that is conducive to the nature of the work it undertakes; the values of the organisation; its public image and reputation; and the welfare and personal security of employees, volunteers and directors. It also seeks to ensure quality delivery of services to service users and members.

Honesty, integrity, independence, fairness, openness and competence are fundamental characteristics marking a successful and professional organisation. An important part of the organisation's work is the development of good working relationships with a range of other organisations. Representatives acting on behalf of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are encouraged to develop such contacts appropriately and observe exceptionally high standards of personal honesty and integrity.

This Code of Conduct sets out what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for employees, volunteers and directors while undertaking work on behalf of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. The examples listed are not exhaustive. Employees, volunteers and directors are expected to:

Support the purpose and processes of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire by

- Performing the function and responsibilities of their role in accordance with any job/role description, work programme, policy and procedures, statutory requirement or quality standards adopted by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- Regularly reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of meeting its goals, including assessing performance and actions.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the abilities, aptitudes, circumstances and roles of other people they interact with.
- Demonstrating good time-management and personal organisation.
- Respecting other people's involvement in meetings and events by being on time and keeping to agreed breaks for timetabled sessions.
- Delivering services in a way that promotes equality and diversity, is impartial, confidential and with professional integrity. Any potential conflict of interest must be declared.
- Involving all who are affected by a plan early enough for their views to shape it.
- Being as clear as possible when planning, defining who will do what by when.
- Observing the highest standards of propriety in relation to the stewardship of charitable and public funds.
- Maximising value for money by ensuring services are delivered in the most economical, efficient and effective way, within available resources.
- Being accountable for its activities and the extent to which key performance targets and objectives have been met.
- Only removing organisational property from the premises with permission or when it is being used at other premises to carry out the work of the organisation.
- Having regard to the health and safety of all staff, volunteers, directors, service users and visitors and following personal safety guidelines.
- Being sensitive to issues of accessibility, both in terms of buildings and other environmental issues, and respecting the premises and facilities used by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

Act with honesty and integrity in all their interactions with colleagues by

- Behaving in a way that is regarded as an acceptable moral standard when at work or undertaking activities on behalf of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- Always behaving in a manner that does not bring the organisation into disrepute or damages its reputation with the public, service users, providers or partners.
- Making decisions in good faith and in the best interest of the organisation and the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- Declaring any conflicts of interests relating to their duties and taking steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- Ensuring they do not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties; including refusing any gift that could reasonably be expected to affect their loyalty.
- Communicating with stakeholders in a timely, accurate, and transparent manner.
- Assuming the best of others and working collaboratively.
- Seeking support when they need it, and offering it when appropriate.
- Thanking or praising colleagues when appropriate.
- Being accountable for their decisions and actions and cooperating fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.
- Taking account of the views of others and reaching their own conclusions on the issues before them and acting in accordance with those conclusions.
- Promoting equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religious belief, gender, sexuality or disability.
- Seeking to ensure they do not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned.
- Treating others fairly; respecting their privacy and dignity; being helpful and courteous.
- Respecting the impartiality and integrity of colleagues, never being derogatory in their speech or manner.
- Respecting the confidentiality of advice provided to the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England or any other organisation, until that advice is published.
- Respecting the confidentiality of information received, including that which is not in the public domain or is relating to individuals, organisations or financial matters. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that this information remains confidential to the meeting or source unless prior authorisation has been given for it to be discussed elsewhere.
- By being objective and making choices on merit when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.
- Being as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take, restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Be considerate in their communications with others by

- Communicating clearly and effectively in plain language. Avoid using jargon – words, phrases, acronyms – that may not be understood by all participants. If you choose to use any it is essential you explain what they mean before doing so.

- Allowing everyone to take part without interruption or intimidation; respecting each other's contribution and not interrupting when someone is speaking.
- Being clear and honest about whether they are giving their personal view or the views of their organisation or the views of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- Being aware of the importance of making effective contributions to discussions, remaining factual and not anecdotal.
- Proposing, and welcoming, new ideas and constructive criticism.
- Raising questions and offering their views at the appropriate times.
- Allowing conversation to move forward; sticking to the point and avoiding long statements or speeches.
- Challenging the issue, not the person, using appropriate language and listening to others' point of view.
- Communicating with due consideration to time, place and manner.
- Recognising that individuals have the right to challenge the use of language that they consider inappropriate and offensive.
- Respecting others' right not to be made to feel uncomfortable by having to listen to inappropriate comments.
- Setting mobile phones to silent or vibrate and notifying the Chair of a meeting before it begins, if they are expecting an urgent call and are likely to have to leave the meeting.

Avoid the kind of behaviour that is not permitted, for example:

- Unauthorised access to confidential information or unnecessary disclosure of confidential information concerning the work of the organisation or its employees/volunteers/directors/service users.
- Gambling, smoking, the taking of illegal drugs or the drinking of alcohol on the organisation's premises (except where the directors have authorised the drinking of alcohol at specific functions held on the premises).
- Threatening, abusive or violent behaviour or language towards another person.
- Behaviour or actions that would in any way jeopardise the safety or well-being of others.
- Repeated or serious failure to follow instructions.
- Making of long or numerous private telephone calls, internet use or emails on the organisation's ICT and telephony equipment.
- Deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornography, offensive or obscene material (unless it is necessary for a specific piece of work and express permission from the Chief Executive Officer has been given).
- Acting or speaking in a way that may be perceived as bullying, abusive, discriminatory or derogatory and using heated, emotional and value loaded language and behaviour.
- Harassment and bullying in any form.
- Using language and illustrations that may cause discrimination, humiliation or offence to others, particularly around age, gender, race, religious belief, disability or sexuality.
- Speaking, claiming to speak, or giving the impression that they speak on behalf of (or are representing) Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire without having been authorised to do.

The following are examples of the kind of behaviour that constitutes gross misconduct and will lead to summary dismissal:

- Serious negligence that results in damage to property, loss or injury.
- Behaviour that seriously jeopardises health and safety.
- Physical violence towards another employee, volunteer, director or service user.
- Serious misuse of the trust that exists between employees/volunteers and service users, in particular young people and vulnerable adults.
- Inept or dangerous incapacity for work due to being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.
- Gross insubordination.
- Deliberate and serious damage to organisation property, theft or fraud.
- Unlawful discrimination or harassment.
- Behaviour causing serious damage to the business or reputation of the organisation.
- Serious infringement of the rules of the organisation.
- Criminal charges or convictions (whether or not they are related to a person's role within, or employment by, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire) that prevent them from undertaking their role or makes them unsuitable for their type of work.

Acknowledge that sometimes things do go wrong by

- Helping us to solve the problem, put things right quickly and effectively, and to learn from complaints.
- Raising issues as soon as possible with colleagues or the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- Acting immediately if something happens which makes your full participation uncomfortable, difficult or prevents you participating as fully as you would wish.
- Being willing to modify your own professional behaviour based on an understanding of how colleagues perceive you.
- Recognising that, if your behaviour is felt to be inappropriate, you may be asked to leave a meeting and/or to reflect on your behaviour in the light of this Code of Conduct.

DECLARATION

I acknowledge and agree to maintain my responsibilities with regards to the Code of Conduct.

Signed: _____ Date _____

Print Name: _____ Role: Employee/Volunteer/Director
(Delete as applicable)