

# HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

## 1. General Policy Statement

- 1.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises its common law and statutory duties and obligations as regards the health, safety and welfare of its staff, volunteers, service users and visitors and aims to:
- maintain an environment that is as healthy and safe as is reasonably practicable;
  - promote and apply safe practices and methods of working as is reasonably practicable;
  - ensure that appropriate training, instruction, information and supervision is provided to achieve these aims.
- 1.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is committed to continually raising health and safety standards. Standards will be established and maintained through documented procedures and by the Chief Executive Officer, who will be responsible for the implementation of this policy and all procedures, in conjunction with delegated staff.
- 1.3 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire undertakes to monitor and review this Health and Safety Policy at regular intervals and to revise its contents as and when necessary.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Directors



John Gelder  
Director

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## 2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy, and the procedures set out within it, is to provide for the health and safety of all employees, volunteers, service users and visitors and to ensure that the organisation complies with Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which states that:

*...it shall be the duty of every employer to prepare and as often as may be appropriate revise a written statement of his general policy with respect to the health and safety at work of his employees and the organisation and arrangements for the time being in force for carrying out that policy, and to bring the statement and any revision of it to the notice of his employees.*

- 2.2 This policy applies to all staff employed by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire; all volunteers and service users engaged in work and services provided by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and all visitors.

## 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 **Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Board of Directors of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. The successful implementation of this policy requires:**
- a shared responsibility, necessitating the cooperation of all employees, volunteers, service users and visitors;
  - an acceptance by each individual of the responsibility to take care of their own health and safety and that of any other person who may be affected by their actions;
  - everyone to have a *duty of care* to act thoughtfully and responsibly, anticipating problems and so preventing them.

### Board of Directors

- 3.2 The directors of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are committed to the following principles:
- risks to employees, volunteers, service users and visitors must be properly assessed, controlled and eliminated where possible;
  - safety training and information sessions must be given to all workers on a regular basis;
  - buildings must be built or converted with the safety of users in mind;
  - safety must be considered when equipment is purchased or new projects are set up;
  - suitable personal protective equipment/clothing must be provided to all individuals who require it;
  - responsibilities for dealing with safety matters must be clearly defined and included in job descriptions;
  - resources must be allocated to deal with safety issues;
  - where safety improvements are required, they must be actioned without delay;
  - records of accidents, near-misses and safety improvement ideas must be kept to provide statistics;
  - changes in legislation and good practice must be incorporated into a regularly updated Health and Safety Policy and disseminated throughout the organisation;
  - constructive advice and ideas about safety improvements are sought and welcomed from appropriate outside bodies (Environmental Health, Fire Officer etc);
  - the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the overall operational management of health and safety on behalf of the directors.

## **Management**

- 3.3 The Chief Executive Officer will have special responsibility for ensuring that:
- fixtures, fittings and equipment are safe and properly maintained by qualified individuals;
  - electrical items are tested regularly in line with Electricity at Work regulations;
  - safety information is clearly displayed;
  - First Aid boxes are available and properly maintained and checked;
  - suitable personal protective equipment and clothing is available to individuals who need it;
  - premises are maintained at a comfortable temperature, with limiters on hot water supply and heaters where needed;
  - clean, properly maintained toilet and washing facilities are provided;
  - health and safety checks, risk assessments and fire-risk assessments are carried out regularly and recorded;
  - safety issues or difficulties, once identified, are dealt with without delay;
  - all volunteers, service users and visitors are made aware of potentially hazardous situations;
  - workers have appropriate and relevant safety training, instruction and supervision, and are fit to undertake their duties;
  - substances hazardous to health are assessed and the risks controlled;
  - accidents, near-misses and reportable diseases are properly reported and that safety issues or difficulties are dealt with without delay.

## **Competent Person (known as the Health and Safety Officer)**

- 3.4 The Chief Executive Officer (or other person so designated) will act as the Competent Person and will:
- undertake independent risk assessments, fire-risk assessments and health and safety audits;
  - advise and guide the directors and the Health and Safety Representative on health and safety issues;
  - keep abreast of developments in health, safety and welfare practice and legislation;
  - report to the directors on any implications for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire;
  - produce an annual report to the Board of Directors on health and safety;
  - ensure that identified training and information needs are met.

## **Health and Safety Representative**

- 3.5 A member of staff (other than the Chief Executive Officer) or a volunteer will act as the Health and Safety Representative and will:
- highlight any hazards and dangerous occurrences they observe;
  - raise any concerns of staff, volunteers, service users and visitors as regards health and safety;
  - be consulted on health & safety matters generally and respond to information provided;
  - act as a source of information on health and safety for service users and visitors.

## **Fire Officer**

- 3.6 The Communications Officer (or other person so designated) will act as the Fire Officer and the Insight and Research Officer (or other person so designated) will act as the Deputy Fire Officer at Capability House.
- 3.7 The Fire Officer will:
- undertake, jointly with the Health and Safety Officer, fire-risk assessments
  - be instructed on potential fire hazards and the use of fire fighting equipment;
  - liaise with the landlord on arrangements for the testing of fire alarms and fire drills;
  - oversee the effective evacuation of staff, volunteers, service users and visitors from the premises;
  - check that all staff, volunteers, service users and visitors present have been accounted for at the assembly point;
  - liaise with the Incident Controller at the assembly point.

## **First Aiders**

- 3.9 One member of staff will act as First Aider having undertaken a recognised Emergency First Aid at Work course and will:
- ensure that the first aid boxes are kept in the correct place
  - regularly check that the first aid boxes contain the items laid down in the Code of Practice and Guidance Notes published by the Health and Safety Executive (and nothing else) and is regularly restocked;
  - ensure that all accidents (however minor) are recorded in the Accident Book.

## **Employees and Volunteers**

- 3.10 By agreeing to work for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (either as an employee or as a volunteer), individuals should:
- be aware of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Health and Safety Policy;
  - read, understand and cooperate in carrying out health and safety procedures and any emergency procedure;
  - attend and follow advice given in safety training and information sessions;
  - ensure they are aware of any hazards associated with their work and the steps that should be taken to minimise any risks;
  - carry out tasks and responsibilities in a safe way and follow safe systems of working;
  - be part of making sure that any buildings used by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are safe; be aware of other regulations that apply to the building where they work and endeavour to co-operate with others responsible for a shared workplace;
  - ensure that health and safety equipment is not misused or damaged;
  - wear personal protective equipment or clothing in situations where this is advised;
  - make sure that their actions, or those of others, are not likely to cause injuries or damage to themselves or others;
  - report any situation or activity that causes concern or may be dangerous;
  - report any accidents or incidents and cooperate in any accident investigations;
  - where appropriate, take immediate remedial action to prevent an accident from happening again;
  - be aware that employees may be held personally liable for negligent actions or be prosecuted where the appropriate regulations or guidance have not been followed;
  - understand that failure to follow health and safety instructions and the misuse of health and safety equipment may result in disciplinary action;

- inform the Chief Executive Officer if they are suffering from an illness or disability;
- pass any suggestions to improve health and safety to the Health and Safety Officer and/or the Health and Safety Representative for consideration.

#### **4. Consultation and Involvement**

- 4.1 Staff and volunteers will be consulted when this policy is reviewed and/or significantly amended to take account of new legislation or newly identified risks or measures to safeguard people's health and safety.
- 4.2 Staff and volunteers will be involved in assessing hazards, controls and action required as part of the annual risk assessment process. They will also receive, and have the opportunity to comment on, a copy of the risk assessment.
- 4.3 Health and safety will be a regular feature of staff meeting agendas, thus providing an opportunity for employees to raise issues, receive information or to consider and comment on health and safety policy, procedures and practice. There will be no separate Health and Safety Committee.

#### **5. Risk Assessments**

- 5.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that a competent person carries out a Health and Safety Risk Assessment and a Fire Risk Assessment in accordance with recommended practice. This will include:
- an assessment of the risks to workers' health and safety whilst at work;
  - an assessment of risks to the health and safety of others (service users, visitors and the public) arising from the organisation's activities;
  - all employees and volunteers, wherever they may be based, and all aspects of their work.
- 5.2 A systematic examination of all activities will be undertaken using the approved form. This must involve identifying:
- the risks and hazards arising from activities (whether from the type of activity or other factors e.g. condition of premises);
  - who might be harmed or affected;
  - existing control measures and the extent to which they control, minimise or eliminate the risks;
  - what further action is needed to control the risk.
- 5.3 It is important that the risk assessment takes account of what actually happens rather than what is supposed to happen. If people ignore safety or other instructions, for example, on the use of equipment, the risk that results should be included within the risk assessment and a decision made on what action to take.
- 5.4 Particular attention should be paid to those who may be especially at risk, for example inexperienced or new staff or volunteers, people with disabilities, parents and carers with young children and those who may have difficulty understanding written or spoken English.
- 5.5 Risk assessments will be reviewed and updated annually (in February) to ensure that any action identified as needed in the risk assessment has been carried out.

- 5.6 Risk assessment will also be updated every time there is a major change in working practices. If a new activity or area of work is developed, if there is a change in premises or if new equipment is purchased, further risk assessments will be needed.
- 5.7 Female employees who become pregnant will also have a risk assessment undertaken by a competent person so as to provide for their health, safety and welfare.
- 5.8 Employees who work at home must satisfy the Health and Safety Officer that it is suitable for them to do so and that they are competent to undertake a risk assessment of their work environment and provide for their health, safety and welfare.
- 5.9 Where external premises or venues are used for events or other activities, a risk assessment will be carried out before confirmation of the booking.
- 5.10 Risk assessments will be written up and be made available to all staff, including the Chief Executive Officer who will ensure that any newly identified control measures are implemented.
- 5.11 Where an annual risk assessment identifies the need to review, develop and implement improvements in a particular aspect of health and safety, this will be incorporated into the Service Delivery Plan.

## **6. Information and Training**

- 6.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that new employees and volunteers receive information on health and safety as part of their induction.
- 6.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that new employees receive information and instruction in manual handling as part of their induction; they may also attend a manual handling training workshop within their first year of employment.
- 6.3 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that service users attending an event will receive information and/or instruction on health and safety at the commencement of the event and at the start of any activity where specific risks have been identified.
- 6.4 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will organise training for employees and volunteers on health and safety matters as appropriate, including: general health and safety training, first aid, manual handling, food hygiene, fire safety, risk assessment. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will also organise training for appropriate use of equipment, and any special training needed to ensure safe systems of work.
- 6.5 If employees and volunteers consider they have health and safety training needs they should inform the Chief Executive Officer.
- 6.6 A record will be kept of those who have attended relevant training and of those who have received any certificate associated with such training.
- 6.7 All staff and volunteers required to work alone and/or in the community will be provided with a copy of The Suzy Lamplugh Trust pamphlet *Personal Safety at Work – A Guide for Everyone* (or similar material).
- 6.8 A range of HSE publications and booklets are available for reference on line at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

## 7. Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare

### Premises

- 7.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and volunteers.
- 7.2 All staff and volunteers are responsible for spotting hazards or potential hazards. If a hazard is seen, it should be removed or dealt with as soon as possible or, if not, reported to the Chief Executive Officer or the Estate Manager at Capability House (as appropriate).
- 7.3 Chairs or other furniture must not be used to stand on for the purposes of fixing things to walls and notice boards, reaching for things off tops of cupboards etc. A properly maintained, undamaged step ladder must be used.
- 7.4 Regular checks must be carried out on furniture and equipment for damage that leave sharp edges protruding or other hazards. Any damaged furniture must be reported for repair or condemnation straight away to the relevant Chief Executive Officer or the Estate Manager at Capability House (as appropriate) and must be removed from use. Damage to the fabric of the building, windows and fixtures and fittings that belong to the landlord must be reported immediately to the Estate Manager at Capability House to ensure that any repairs are carried out swiftly with the minimum of disruption.
- 7.5 All building maintenance such as electrical work, carpentry, painting etc should be carried out by skilled people. Staff should not endanger themselves or others by carrying out such work.
- 7.6 **Aisles and Gangways** – any furniture, equipment or supplies left in an inappropriate place, for example obstructing a gangway, must be removed immediately, and placed in an appropriate, safe place. Gangways must be kept clear from obstructions and materials must be stored in safe areas. Under no circumstances must goods or materials be stacked immediately in front of or obstructing fire doors, fire exits, fire alarms or fire equipment.
- 7.7 **Overcrowding** – Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will avoid unhealthy and overcrowded working conditions; maintain the general minimum space per person, recommended by the 1992 Regulations, of 11 cubic metres; and will consult staff on any changes in office layout.

### Working Environment

- 7.8 **Ventilation** – Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will endeavour to provide a well ventilated workplace in which staff have control over their local level of ventilation.
- 7.9 **Temperature** – Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will do all in its power to ensure reasonable temperatures in the workplace at all times. Efforts will be made, so far as is reasonably practical, to ensure the workplace temperature is maintained at a minimum of 16°C and that it does not rise to an uncomfortable level.
- 7.10 **Lighting** – adequate lighting must be provided. If lights are found to be out of order, the fault must be reported to the Estate Manager at Capability House, who will arrange for it to be corrected as soon as reasonably possible.
- 7.11 **Noise** – most staff and volunteers work within a shared office and therefore a certain level of noise is unavoidable, however Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will endeavour to ensure that noise is kept to as low a level as is practicable.

- 7.12 **Office Atmospheric Pollutants** – office equipment, such as photocopiers and printers, can emit pollutants into the atmosphere. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will take reasonable precautions in ensuring that these levels are kept as low as is possible by confining such equipment to specially designed and well ventilated spaces.

## Equipment

- 7.13 The Chief Executive Officer will hold copies of manufacturers' detailed instructions on the maintenance of equipment and ensure that maintenance contracts are adhered to and, where appropriate, renewed. They will also ensure that all equipment is maintained and kept in good repair.
- 7.14 Staff and volunteers should only use office equipment for the purpose for which it is intended and after receiving appropriate instruction. Before using the equipment they should make a visual check of the equipment and report any damage to the Chief Executive Officer.
- 7.15 **Equipment Storage and Usage** – equipment must not be left lying around but must either be suitably stored or left out in designated areas.
- 7.16 **Electrical Equipment** – cables must not be left trailing across floors or in an untidy and unsafe state under desks. Cables under desks must be secured using cable ties and kept away from the foot well. Where cables are run across floors to power projectors and laptops for presentations etc., they should be laid correctly in a rubber cable cover. Broken, ineffective or damaged electrical equipment must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer or the Estate Manager at Capability House (as appropriate). Staff and volunteers must not bring in their own electrical equipment for use in the office.
- 7.17 **Portable Appliance Testing** – the relevant Chief Executive Officer will ensure all portable electrical appliances and equipment is periodically inspected and tested for compliance with *The Electricity at Work Regulations (Health and Safety Act 1974)*.
- 7.18 **Welfare Arrangements**
- 7.19 **Toilets and Washing Facilities** – Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will seek to ensure that suitable and sufficient toilets and washing facilities are provided for all staff and volunteers in accordance with the minimum requirements of Health and Safety legislation:
- one toilet/washbasin for 1-5 staff/volunteers;
  - each toilet will be in a separate, lockable room;
  - washing facilities will include a supply of clean hot and cold water, soap and a suitable means of drying (e.g. paper towels).
- 7.20 **Drinking Water** – an adequate supply of drinking water will be provided for all staff, volunteers, service users and visitors. This is available from water coolers on the first floor landing and from the kitchen on the ground floor.
- 7.21 **Rest Areas** – so far as is reasonably practicable Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will provide all staff and volunteers with seating away from their desks, where they may rest during normal work breaks. Suitable rest facilities will be provided for pregnant employees and volunteers.
- 7.22 **Hours of Work** – employees should not work excessively long hours and should take adequate breaks for meals and rest as indicated within the organisation's Flexi-Time Policy.

## Cleanliness

- 7.23 **Universal Hygiene Controls** – the Estate Manager at Capability House will be responsible for ensuring that:
- all areas are kept clean;
  - toilets are washed regularly and kept clean;
  - all wash basins are provided with hot water, soap, clean paper towels or hand dryers;
  - disposal bins for sanitary products are provided, emptied and sanitised regularly.
- 7.24 **Spillage and Soiling** – Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire staff should undertake additional cleaning if there is spillage or soiling. When clearing up broken glass, use heavy duty industrial gloves or call the Estate Manager of Capability House, and dispose of broken glass by wrapping it in ample paper that is taped up and marked as broken glass.
- 7.25 **Rubbish and Recycled Materials** should only be accumulated in the bins provided.

## Smoking

- 7.26 In order to protect all employees, volunteers, service users, consultants, contractors and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke and assist compliance with the Health Act 2006 all our workplaces are smoke free. All individuals have a right to a smoke free environment.
- 7.27 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that sufficient *No Smoking* signs are displayed. Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed and substantially enclosed premises, including:
- the whole of the premises, car park and grounds of Capability House, except for the designated smoking area outside, at the rear of the building;
  - any premises used for Healthwatch events or other activities;
  - temporary premises (e.g. gazebo) used for out-door events, whether enclosed or not.
- 7.28 Employees and volunteers are not permitted to smoke while undertaking work for the organisation in the office or elsewhere in a public place (other than in a private dwelling or vehicle). They may take short breaks if there is a need to smoke; which, for staff, will be in accordance with the Flexi-Time Policy. Such breaks must be outside of the workplace, with any associated litter disposed of in a safe and appropriate way.
- 7.29 Employees, volunteers and directors working at home and using any part of a private dwelling solely as a place of work where more than one person (e.g. a colleague or service user) uses this space are required to keep it smoke free. If working in rooms used primarily for private purposes the employee, volunteer or director is asked to respect the fact that any colleague or service user invited in may wish to work in a smoke free environment.
- 7.30 Employees, volunteers and directors are not prohibited from smoking in their own vehicle if it is used primarily for private purposes. However, car sharing with colleagues, volunteers, consultants or service users while carrying out work on behalf of the organisation the employee, volunteer or director is asked to respect the fact that passengers may wish to travel in a smoke free environment.
- 7.31 Failure to comply with the law is a criminal offence and could result in individuals and the organisation being fined. Service users, consultants, contractors and visitors in breach of this policy will be reminded of the *No Smoking* signs displayed and asked to stop smoking or to go outside; failure to comply will result in a warning that they are committing an

offence and may be fined, that Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will cease to provide any further services, and a request that they be asked to leave the premises. A written record of all incidents will be made and kept by the Chief Executive Officer.

## **8. Personal Safety**

### **Office Security**

- 8.1 It is in the nature of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's work that staff and volunteers may, on occasions, find themselves in potentially dangerous situations whilst attending to the organisation's business. The following policy is concerned to minimise the risk to people working for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- 8.2 There must always be a minimum of two members of staff and/or volunteers present on the premises at times when it is open to casual visitors. On occasions when this is not possible staff/volunteers working at the premises should only meet visitors in the reception area of Capability House. Casual visitors should not be taken to the office and should be encouraged to make an appointment where appropriate.
- 8.3 When staff or volunteers meet with known service users or run community events in the evenings and at week-ends they may work alone provided they have undertaken a risk assessment and are comfortable to do so.
- 8.4 Where staff are dealing with an individual but feel uneasy about being alone with them they have the right to refuse to make an appointment or give access if it would put them in that position. In these situations Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire trusts the intuition and feelings of the worker.
- 8.5 Similarly, if staff are running a community event in the evening or during a week-end but feel uneasy about doing so alone they have the right to be accompanied by another member of staff.

### **Personal Safety whilst away from Normal Workplace**

- 8.6 Staff who are going to be away on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire business should make it clear to other staff where they will be, how long for and how they can be contacted. This should be recorded on the global calendar on the office ICT system.
- 8.7 Staff who are going to meet service users MUST record the name of the person and, if appropriate, the organisation they are to meet, the full address of the venue where the meeting is to take place, and any contact details for the venue. This must be recorded in the global calendar on the office ICT system.
- 8.8 If in the course of a trip away from the premises plans change significantly, this should be communicated back to colleagues.
- 8.9 Staff should ensure they complete an Emergency Contact Form, make it clear who they wish to be informed (outside of work) in the event of an emergency and how they can normally be contacted.
- 8.10 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will keep a supply of personal alarms for use by staff and volunteers where appropriate. Mobile phones will be provided for staff who work away from the main office.

- 8.11 Where staff are running a community event at venues other than Capability House; whether during office hours, in the evening or during a week-end; but feel uneasy about doing so alone they have the right to be accompanied by another member of staff or a volunteer.
- 8.12 Meetings with service users other than at Capability House should preferably take place in a neutral, public venue (e.g. another organisation's office, Central Bedfordshire Council Customer Service interview room, public library, café etc.). Meetings should NOT take place at a service user's home, except with the explicit permission of the Chief Executive Officer in circumstances where meeting in a public venue is not possible (e.g. where the person has a disability, is unable to travel or there are no suitable facilities).
- 8.13 If there is any doubt or concern about whether a home visit should be made, make the visit with a colleague or decline to make it and insist on a neutral, public venue.
- 8.14 All staff and volunteers meeting service users at premises other than at Capability House must carry an identity card (issued by the Communications Officer).
- 8.15 When visiting service users in their own home do not enter if there is an obvious risk, e.g. drunk or aggressive behaviour, unfriendly animals, an unhealthy environment or other unexpected people. Identify an exit route should it be required.
- 8.16 If the meeting is with a service user not previously known to the staff member or volunteer, or where there are concerns about meeting them, whether at their home, in a public place or out of office hours then the employee or volunteer MUST make specific arrangements with their line manager/supervisor for contacting and advising them that they have concluded the meeting and left the premises safely. This must be made BEFORE the meeting takes place. If for some reason the meeting has to be extended or over runs, the employee or volunteer MUST telephone their line manager/supervisor and advise accordingly.
- 8.17 In the event of a staff member or volunteer failing to make contact at the appropriate time the line manager/supervisor must attempt to make contact with the staff member or volunteer to ascertain if they are safe and well. If, after several attempts, contact can not be made then the individual's Emergency Contact should be contacted. The Chief Executive Officer must also be informed.

### **Personal Safety whilst Handling or Carrying Money or Valuables**

- 8.18 Staff who carry money for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire have the right to be accompanied by another person.
- 8.19 Large amounts of cash, over and above petty cash, should not be kept on the premises. Cash kept on the premises should be locked away when not in use. Cash should only be dealt with when the office is locked or there is another member of staff present. Cash must not be left unattended.
- 8.20 Under no circumstances should staff put themselves at risk on account of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's property. If money is demanded with threats it should be handed over.

### **Reporting and Recording Aggression or Violence**

- 8.21 All incidents and threats of aggression or violence towards a member of staff, volunteer or their family/friends should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer and recorded in the accident book.

8.22 Staff and volunteers should report any current or potential situation at work that is a threat to personal safety. Talking about fear and other problems related to aggression or harassment is not a mark of failure but good practice. A serious incident, even if it results in no physical harm, may cause feelings of fear, panic or despair that can carry on long afterwards. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises this and will be disposed to provide whatever support, counselling or time off work seems appropriate.

## Personal Safety Awareness whilst Out and About

There are lots of things we already do that keep us safe, but becoming more aware of our surroundings puts us in control of our environment. The following steps are recommended to staff and volunteers as being helpful.

**Trust your intuition and listen to your feelings.** If you sense something is wrong, it probably is. Acting on intuition may prevent an aggressive situation.

**Be prepared.** Do you know whom to contact and what to do if a difficult situation arises? Find out and if there is no one designated, ask for a supervisor or line manager to be nominated.

**Be observant.** Notice everything around you - exit doors, telephones, windows, sources of help. This will make you more aware of your surroundings and help you escape if you need to.

**Assess potential risks.** Avoid dangerous short cuts, walk facing the traffic on the street side of pavements, think about where you park your car and remember where you have parked it.

**Make sure you have all relevant information with you.** Have you checked to see if there is a known problem with whom you are to meet or where you are going?

**Look confident.** *Walking tall* and being aware of your surroundings deters assailants.

**Never stay in a situation where you think you may be at risk.** Don't feel you have to stay because of your work. You can see the learner/service user, arrange the visit or do the interview again. You can ask a colleague to come in or be with you. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

**Be aware of personal space** – yours and others. Encroaching on other people's personal space can make them aggressive. If other people are too close to you and making you uncomfortable, ask for more space or move away.

**Don't get into lifts with people who make you feel uneasy.** If you are in a lift and feel uncomfortable, get out and use the stairs, or wait for another lift. Make sure you know where the emergency button is and stand where you can reach it.

**Don't accept lifts in vehicles from people you have no reason to trust.**

**Think about what you are wearing,** can you run if you need to?

## **Personal Safety Awareness when Dealing with Aggression**

If you find yourself in an aggressive situation, what can you do?

**Try to stay calm** if someone is starting to get angry. Your body language, voice and response can help to defuse a situation. Take a deep breath, keep your voice on an even keel, and try to help.

**Offer an angry person a range of options** from which they can choose the one they prefer. They will find it difficult to stay angry.

**Do not be aggressive back** – this is how anger can escalate into violence.

**Are you the best person to deal with this situation?** Going to get someone else is often helpful particularly if they can solve a problem that you can't.

**Get on the same level as the aggressor.** If they are standing so should you. It makes you feel less vulnerable and makes it easier for you to get away or fetch help if necessary.

**Keep your balance and keep your distance.**

**Do not touch someone who is angry.**

**Don't let your escape route be blocked.** Keep yourself between an escape route and an aggressor so you can still get away.

**If the situation is dangerous, then get away as fast as you can.** Never remain alone with an actively violent person.

**If you cannot get away, then scream or use a panic alarm.**

## **9. Display Screen Equipment**

- 9.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will comply with the law as set out in the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992.
- 9.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will conduct health and safety assessments of all workstations staffed by employees and volunteers who use Display Screen Equipment as part of their usual work. All workstations must meet the requirements set out in the Schedule to the Regulations.
- 9.3 Resources will be sought by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire to:
- provide adequate workstation space;
  - provide appropriate seating for the workstation;
  - enable screens to be adjustable screen (e.g. in height, swivel etc) to allow for the individual preference of the operator;
  - provide keyboards that are separate from screens;
  - provide computer cleaning supplies;
  - provide a wrist and/or foot rest at each workstation, where required;
  - provide anti glare screens, where direct light cannot be prevented from falling on the screen.
- 9.4 Where a member of staff is designated a display screen user and is experiencing eyesight problems attributable to their work with Display Screen Equipment they will be entitled to have an eyesight test paid for by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- 9.5 Where an eyesight test shows that, as a result of work solely on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Display Screen Equipment, the employee needs to purchase glasses specifically for Display Screen Equipment use, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will pay for standard specification glasses only; this excludes any prescription for general or other specific eyesight problems.
- 9.6 Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (also known as Repetitive Strain Injury) are often associated with keyboard work. It is the intention of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, by following best advice, to provide display screens, keyboards and furniture that help prevent the development of these musculoskeletal disorders. Staff however should contribute to their own safety and welfare by:
- avoiding sitting in the same position for long periods;
  - adjusting equipment and furniture to appropriate/comfortable positions;
  - taking a rest break from using Display Screen Equipment (at least ten minutes away for every hour at the screen) by doing some other work; short frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional longer breaks.

## **10. Fire and Emergency Procedures**

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of fire hazards, to know the location of fire alarm buttons, fire exits and the assembly point. Everyone must know the evacuation procedures, and these will be part of the induction process for all new staff and volunteers.
- 10.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that adequate fire fighting equipment is provided and maintained by the landlord.
- 10.3 Access to escape doors, extinguishers and other fire fighting equipment must not be obstructed.

- 10.4 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's appointed Fire Officers are responsible for:
- ensuring that staff, volunteers and visitors are aware of the evacuation procedures;
  - removing obstructions from fire exits;
  - reviewing after each evacuation the success or otherwise of the evacuation and to make recommendations for improved practices.

### **Capability House**

- 10.5 The Wrest Park Estate Manager is responsible for ensuring that the fire alarms are tested at regular intervals, usually between 7.00am and 8.00am on Monday mornings, and for carrying out at least three Fire Drills each year. The Chief Executive Officer will liaise with the Estate Manager to ensure these are undertaken.
- 10.6 All staff and volunteers; anyone attending a Healthwatch Central event at Capability House; and visitors to the offices must be made fully familiar with the escape routes and the assembly point.
- 10.7 In the event of a fire or emergency, all staff, volunteers and visitors must follow the Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedure, as set out on page 17. A copy of this procedure will be displayed in the Office.

### **Other Premises**

- 10.8 When using other premises for events the event organiser will undertake a fire risk assessment of the premises, familiarise themselves with the fire exits and evacuation procedure, and advise participants of these at the start of each workshop or event.

## **Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedure for Capability House**

### **On discovering a fire**

- Raise the alarm by either setting off the red alarm button (or verbally letting all your colleagues know that they have to leave the building).
- Fire alarm buttons are situated on the wall inside the 1<sup>st</sup> floor stairwells located on each side of the atrium.
- Ensure all doors are closed on the premises, to help contain the fire.
- **BE AWARE THAT UNLESS YOU KNOW HOW TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO USE IT!**

### **On hearing the fire alarm**

- Leave the building immediately by the nearest fire exit (using the stairwell on either side of the first floor atrium landing).
- **DO NOT** stop to collect personal belongings.
- **DO NOT** use the lift.
- Proceed to the Assembly Point on the grass verge outside the main entrance.
- The Fire Officer (or, in their absence, the Deputy Fire Officer) will collect the Visitors Book from the Office without endangering their own escape.
- Staff hosting a meeting or event will collect the attendance register from the room where the meeting is being held, without endangering their own escape.
- The Fire Officer will check that everyone has vacated the Healthwatch offices.
- If you are aware of any persons that are either in the lift, toilets or refused to exit the building it is your duty to inform the Fire Officer.
- Register your presence in the roll call of all staff, volunteers and visitors (which will be taken using the list in the signing in book).
- **DO NOT** return to the building until advised to do so by the Fire Officer.

### **After the Evacuation**

- The Fire Officer should confirm that all staff, volunteers and visitors are accounted for by informing the Incident Controller.
- The Fire Officer or Incident Controller will notify you when it is safe to re-enter the building.
- The Fire Officer will contact the Chief Executive Officer if there has been an incident and they are not aware of it.

## 11. First Aid and Accident Reporting

- 11.1 First Aid provision will be available at all times in an appropriate and accessible First Aid Box kept in the Office at Capability House.
- 11.2 A First Aid Box will also be available at all events.
- 11.3 At least one employee will receive appropriate first aid training. The name(s) of those certified to provide first aid will be displayed in the Office at Capability House.
- 11.4 All new employees and volunteers will be told as part of their induction of the location of first aid equipment and the employees who have received first aid training.
- 11.5 After assessment and/or treatment by the First Aider it may be necessary to call an ambulance or transfer the casualty to their GP or health centre.
- 11.6 A record of all first aid cases treated will be kept in the Accident Book, which will be kept with the First Aid Box in the Office.
- 11.7 All employees and volunteers must report all incidents that did or nearly resulted in personal injury to themselves or others, to the Chief Executive Officer and make sure the incident is recorded in the Accident Book.
- 11.8 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that any necessary follow up action is taken to reduce the risk of the accident or near accident reoccurring.
- 11.9 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for reporting incidents that come within the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) to Central Bedfordshire Council's Head of Public Protection and others, as appropriate. RIDDOR covers the following incidents:
  - (a) fatal accidents;
  - (b) major injury accidents\conditions;
  - (c) dangerous occurrences;
  - (d) accidents causing more than three days incapacity for work;
  - (e) certain work-related diseases.

## 12. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

- 12.1 Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 1992 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has a duty to make an assessment of the risks related to hazardous substances, e.g. chemicals, noxious fumes etc. In accordance with the Approved Code of Practice this assessment will be carried out and written down by the Health and Safety Officer.
- 12.2 Following this assessment, in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will:
  - (a) in the first instance, take action to **remove** any hazardous substances;
  - (b) if this is not possible, then action shall be taken to find a **substitute** for the hazardous substance;
  - (c) if this is not possible, such substances shall be **enclosed** within a safe environment;
  - (d) if none of the above are possible, **protective equipment** will be issued to ensure the safety of users.

- 12.3 All members of staff and volunteers shall avoid using hazardous substances at all times if at all possible. Where substitute materials are available they should be used (e.g. water based markers, correction fluid etc).
- 12.4 If there is no way of avoiding use of a hazardous substance, then staff and volunteers must:
- read the product label and follow any directions;
  - use any protective clothing/equipment provided;
  - use the substance in an enclosed, ventilated environment away from other workers;
  - not eat, drink or smoke when using chemicals;
  - wash hands properly after use and before eating or drinking;
  - ensure any contaminated clothing or equipment is cleaned;
  - beware that spillage may give off excessive fumes or be hazardous to clean up.
- 12.5 If for any reason a member of staff or volunteer has to be exposed to a possibly hazardous substance, levels of exposure will be monitored; as will the levels of ill-health related to exposure to hazardous substances at work.

### **13. Manual Handling**

- 13.1 Staff and volunteers should avoid manual lifting where at all possible; however, they may occasionally be required to manually handle loads. This includes lifting, supporting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving a load. Correct manual lifting and handling reduces the effort required and prevents strain and risk of injury.
- 13.2 The most likely occurrences of manual handling are:
- the receipt and storage of stationary orders and literature;
  - moving paper records into archive storage;
  - rearranging the furniture and equipment;
  - handling display equipment, moving chairs and tables etc. at events.
- 13.3 Staff and volunteers preparing bulk mail, literature for events or paper for recycling etc. must ensure it is not too heavy and can be easily lifted; larger numbers of smaller units that are easier to lift will prevent strain and the risk of injury.
- 13.4 Staff and volunteers should not put themselves at risk by attempting to lift heavy loads. The assistance of others should always be sought for moving large quantities or for lifting heavy and awkward loads. When lifting in a team take instructions from one person only.
- 13.5 If manual handling is necessary, safe systems of work should be used. Any employee or volunteer feeling a strain should stop immediately and record the incident in the Accident Book. To continue may result in more serious injury.

## Safe Systems of Work for Manual Handling

### Consider and Plan the Task

- Make a judgement of the weight of the item to be moved.
- Check for sharp edges, stability, weight distribution.
- Can it be divided into smaller units?
- Can you do it by yourself, or do you need help? If so, get others to assist you.
- Use handling aids whenever possible to reduce the risk of injury (e.g. crates, sack trolley, lifts).
- Check the route for obstacles.
- Warn people on the route what you intend doing.
- Plan rest stops.

### Lifting

- Position yourself as close to the load as possible, forming a stable base with your feet.
- If you need to bend, keep your back in a natural straight line and bend your knees.
- Get a good grip on the load.
- Using your legs, keep your chin up, bring the load up to your chest in a smooth action.
- Keep the load close to the body.

### Carrying

- Once you are sure you have control of the load, move off with a smooth action.
- Ensure you can see where you are going.
- Keep your arms tucked into your sides, do not change grip or twist the body.

### Setting Down

- Carry out the lifting process in reverse.
- Be careful not to trap fingers or toes.
- Rest the load on the edge of a desk or table and push it into position.
- Ensure the load is securely in place and safe before moving away.

## 14. Food Hygiene and Safety

14.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will meet it's obligations under

- the Food Safety Act 1990;
- Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995;
- Food Safety (Temperature Control) Regulations 1995; and
- any subsequent legal requirements.

In order to meet these legal obligations all those who are involved in food preparation and serving must follow this Policy and the guidelines and procedures relating to it.

14.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that it has systems in place to ensure food is always safe for workers and service users.

14.3 This policy covers any kitchen or food preparation area at facilities where the serving of food and refreshments is undertaken for events run by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

14.4 The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for maintaining food safety and adherence to food safety standards in kitchens or food preparation areas at premises utilised by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (e.g. for events); and for day to day provision of refreshments for staff, volunteers and visitors.

- 14.5 All other staff and volunteers who have use of kitchens or food preparation areas are responsible for ensuring that they follow food safety standards and any guidelines and procedures for maintaining food safety issued by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- 14.6 All staff and volunteers involved in food preparation and serving must receive the relevant food hygiene and safety training.
- 14.7 The provision of food and refreshments will be included in the annual health and safety risk assessment. Where hazards have been identified and assessments carried out food safety information sheets may need to be compiled and control measures set out, including critical control points.
- 14.8 Risk assessments may need to include risks arising from individuals who are on special diets or who are allergic to certain substances and ingredients.
- 14.9 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for identifying potential hazards (microbiological, physical, chemical and natural) and for carrying out food safety risk assessments. They must also review these assessments on a regular basis and ensure the controls are being implemented and are effective in eliminating the hazard or in reducing any harmful effects. Individual events may need to be risk assessed separately before any activities take place.

## **The Working Environment**

- 14.10 **Housekeeping** – all kitchen and food preparation areas must be kept clean and tidy. Any wet or slippery floors must be dealt with immediately or hazard signs put up. All material and equipment must be stored away after use, and a daily cleaning regime undertaken.
- 14.11 Only those who have roles within the area should have access, all other staff/volunteers/ service users should be asked to stay outside the designated food preparation area.
- 14.12 **Hygiene** – the legal standards and requirements relating to food and personal hygiene must be followed. All surfaces and equipment/utensils must be cleaned regularly to the desired standard.
- 14.13 **Food preparation** – those involved in food preparation must follow the relevant food safety standards for the way food and drink is prepared, stored, cooked or reheated. Where appropriate, the appropriate temperature standards must be adhered to, and temperatures checked regularly to ensure this.
- 14.14 **Cooking own Food** – staff and volunteers heating up/cooking their own food in kitchens or food preparation areas must follow these requirements in the same way in order to prevent cross-contamination.
- 14.15 **Waste** – surplus food and any other cooking substances must be disposed of in accordance with the food safety standards.
- 14.16 **Equipment** – equipment and implements must be suitable for the task, maintained and serviced appropriately and in accordance with any food safety standards. Any defective equipment or implements must be withdrawn from use immediately, repaired or disposed of.
- 14.17 **Ventilation/Temperature** – there must be adequate ventilation in kitchen and food preparation areas; temperatures must be comfortable for those involved in food preparation or associated work.

- 14.18 **Incidents or Illness Related to Food Safety** – any employee or volunteer involved in food preparation or the serving of refreshments and who suffers from the following
- an infectious disease (such as hepatitis, skin condition);
  - gastro-enteritis or food poisoning (such as salmonella);
  - allergic reactions;
- must stay away from food preparation areas and refrain from serving refreshments in order to prevent further illness.
- 14.19 Any person working in a kitchen or food preparation area who does not feel fit or capable of carrying out their role and tasks must immediately notify their line manager/supervisor or the event organiser.
- 14.20 Where any injury has occurred individuals must wear the appropriate covering or not take part in food preparation activities.
- 14.21 **Accidents** – any accidents or incidents that occur must be reported and recorded in the normal way and investigated.
- 14.22 **Pests** – immediately any infestation is observed (e.g. mice, rats, cockroaches, ants) the matter will need to be reported to the Estates Manager (in the case of Capability House), the owner of any hired venues or Central Bedfordshire Council's Head of Public Protection.
- 14.23 **Food Safety Alerts** – product recalls and safety alerts must be complied with immediately. Retailers and manufacturers have a duty to notify customers; the Chief Executive Officer must also take action on any media notifications.
- 14.24 **Transportation** – specific measures (e.g. keeping food hot or chilled) must be put in place when food and drink is transported from the food preparation site to another site.

## **Storage of Food**

- 14.25 Food and drink must be stored in accordance with the food safety standards. Storage areas and containers must be appropriate to the substance, kept at the right temperature and kept tidy and easily accessible.
- 14.26 Regular checks must be undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer to ensure the food and drink is fit to use, and that the use by date has not expired. Any food and material that has gone beyond the use by date must be safely disposed of. Under no circumstances must these be passed on to another person or organisation to use or sell (e.g. charities, service users).

## **Purchase and Supply of Food**

- 14.27 Food and drink must only be purchased from reputable suppliers and caterers.
- 14.28 Some food may contain substances that cause adverse allergic reactions that could be dangerous to those affected. Illness may also occur when those on special diets inadvertently eat or drink food without knowing the ingredients. Every effort should be made to ascertain whether participants at events have any special dietary requirements and to ensure these are met. All food must be properly and adequately labelled; either by the caterer or the event organiser; with vegetarian, meat, and fish dishes served on separate plates/platters.

- 14.29 Any donations of commercially produced food and drink must be checked to ensure it is within the use by dates – any exceeding these must be returned or disposed of.
- 14.30 Any donations of home cooked food or drink must not be accepted, and politely declined explaining that Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire must abide by legal requirements and however well prepared, food and drink may cause adverse reactions and illness amongst other people.

## **15. Driving**

- 15.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire could be seen as liable for accidents/incidents that involve employees and volunteers using their own vehicle to undertake business activities or voluntary work on behalf of the organisation.
- 15.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is therefore expected to undertake risk assessments for road journeys and to implement appropriate control measures and safe systems of work that take account of current legislation, which includes the road traffic acts, the use of mobile phones whilst driving, fitness to drive and use of drugs and alcohol. Health and safety legislation includes taking account of all those involved or who could be affected by the hazardous activity.
- 15.3 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will include in its annual health and safety risk assessment those staff and volunteers who regularly drive for the organisation. This will not include staff journeys to and from their work base but the driving that takes place while undertaking business activities or voluntary work on behalf of the organisation. The risk assessment should quantify the amount of time spent driving and the purpose of the journeys, including whether people and/or material is being transported.

### **Driver Responsibilities**

- 15.4 While undertaking business activities or voluntary work on behalf of the organisation, the driver is expected to:
- risk assess all journeys including those that may involve hazardous situations, such as adverse weather;
  - consider the necessity of journeys, safe routes, other forms of transportation;
  - comply with the Road Traffic Acts and the Highway Code;
  - take reasonable care of own health and safety, and that of others who might be affected by the driver's actions;
  - notify their line manager if not fit or competent to drive;
  - maintain the vehicle in a safe and reliable condition;
  - ensure that legal documents (i.e. vehicle registration document, MOT certificate, insurance and driving licence) are held and kept up to date;
  - not use a hand held mobile phone whilst driving;
  - be responsible for the payment of car parking or road traffic offences fines;
  - ensure any equipment or materials being transported are safely secured within the vehicle and do not obstruct the driver's vision;
  - not smoke in their own or others' vehicles when carrying passengers;
  - notify the Chief Executive Officer of any incidents that occur whether an injury occurred or not, and in particular when resulting in legal action.
- 15.5 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will:
- ensure the suitability and fitness of drivers on appointment and on an ongoing basis;
  - undertake audits and risk assessments and take appropriate measures;

- set up, maintain and review safe systems of work;
- provide training, instruction and information to drivers;
- not set time scales or schedules that will compromise the safety of the driver and any passengers;
- not expect the driver to answer a mobile phone whilst driving;
- investigate any incidents reported and take remedial action to prevent or minimise a re-occurrence.

## **Training and Information**

- 15.6. New employees and volunteers who are expected to drive as part of their role will be made aware of this policy on commencement and referred to The Highway Code and any other relevant information.

## **Motor Insurance**

- 15.7 Employees and volunteers are responsible for advising their motor insurance provider that they use their vehicle in order to undertake business or voluntary activities.
- 15.8 Where employees incur additional premiums because they have had to incorporate business use into their insurance policy they will be expected to cover such premiums themselves.
- 15.9 Where a volunteer has had to incorporate business use into their insurance policy, and there are no other insurers willing to add this free of charge, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will consider paying the excess amount for those volunteer drivers required to drive their vehicles for the organisation.

## **Accidents and Incidents**

- 15.10 All accidents and incidents (personal harm or stress caused by near misses or road rage, sudden illness to driver or passenger, theft from vehicle, police action including arrest or vehicle being towed away) whilst on work-related driving duties must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer immediately, who must investigate any accidents or incidents within 48 hours and carry out further notifications as may be required.
- 15.11 Any driver who, while undertaking business activities or voluntary work on behalf of the organisation, behaves recklessly, endangers their passengers or other people, uses a vehicle that is unsafe, drives whilst unfit to do so, or commits a traffic or other offence (other than fixed penalty fines) connected with driving will face disciplinary action. The Chief Executive Officer may suspend a member of staff or a volunteer from driving duties if there is any cause for concern whilst the matter is investigated.

## **16. Working at Home**

- 16.1 Employees may make arrangements with colleagues, and have the agreement of the Chief Executive Officer, to work at home on a regular or occasional basis, provided the nature of their work does not require the employee to be present in the office.

- 16.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has the same responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of employees who work at home as those who work from its offices.
- 16.3 Most home workers are involved in office-type activities, such as the use of personal computers, reading and the drafting of papers and this normally presents the same risks at home as in the normal workplace. The major risks to health are thus likely to come from faulty electrical equipment, trip hazards including trailing wires, and failure to follow guidelines on working with display screen equipment.
- 16.4 Home working may also include occasional requirements for manual handling. The risk of injury whilst at home should be low but additional care will need to be taken by the employee if their domestic situation means they have limited space, where they may need to set up their workstation and/or lift computer equipment.
- 16.5 Employees working at home must take reasonable care of their own health and safety, as well as that of other people, such as family members, in particular the presence of children and vulnerable adults; neighbours and visitors. They must also ensure equipment used for work purposes is safe and correctly used and that hazardous substances and any equipment that may present a danger to others are kept out of reach or made secure.

## **Risk Assessment**

- 16.6 Prior to their first occasion of working at home, the employee must satisfy the Health and Safety Officer that it is suitable for them to work from home. This should include assurances that the employee:
- has the necessary personal qualities to successfully do this, including the need to adhere to time restrictions and manage workloads;
  - has an awareness of the dangers of working excessive hours and the need to take regular breaks, particularly if working on display screen equipment;
  - has undertaken a self assessment of the home workplace;
  - is able to ensure that any hazards and risks arising from their home workstation can be eliminated or reduced;
  - has taken account of home-specific risks, such as the presence of children and vulnerable adults;
  - has premises fit for the purpose of their work (i.e. that are clean, safe, adequately lit and heated);
  - has adequate equipment within their home for doing their work, e.g. a home computer or a laptop computer supplied by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire;
  - is aware of the need to report any accident or incident relating to a work activity to the Chief Executive Officer.
- 16.7 Where the employee is contracted to work at home and has to use display screen equipment, it may be necessary for the Health and Safety Officer to visit the home to carry out the risk assessment, whether or not the equipment is provided by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. In such situations the cooperation of the home worker is paramount.

## **Equipment**

- 16.8 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will not permanently supply equipment to individuals who wish to work from home unless they are specifically asked to work from home on a permanent basis for the purpose of fulfilling their particular role.

- 16.9 Employees may be assigned a laptop computer for their sole use where this is suitable for their role. Employees wishing to use a laptop computer from the pool of laptops for general use must agree this in advance with the Communications Officer and record their usage of this equipment in the Global Calendar on the office IT system.
- 16.10 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will be responsible for the maintenance and testing of electrical equipment supplied to an employee for use at home. It is not responsible for the safety of electrical sockets, extension leads or the domestic electrical system, which remains the responsibility of the home worker.
- 16.11 It is the responsibility of the home worker to carry out visual checks of equipment they use, including their own personal equipment used for work purposes, and to ensure that the domestic electrical system is adequate for the electrical equipment used and/or provided.
- 16.12 Consideration should be given to the use of residual current devices which can be plugged into the appropriate sockets to aid the protection of the home worker from both unsafe equipment and faulty electrical supplies.

### **Information and Training**

- 16.13 Staff who wish to work at home will be instructed to carry out their own workstation and display screen risk assessments and the Health and Safety Officer must be satisfied that the home worker is competent to carry these out.
- 16.14 All staff who wish to work at home will be provided with a copy of the Health and Safety Executive's pamphlet *Homeworking – Guidance for Employers and Employees on Health and Safety* (or similar material).

### **Monitoring and Review**

- 16.15 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is aware of the possible harmful effect of home workers feeling isolated after prolonged periods of home working and will seek to eliminate or minimise this through regular contact and monitoring.
- 16.16 The working arrangements of staff who work at home will be reviewed annually as part of the annual risk assessment or at any other time where either the home worker or Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire feel this is necessary. It is important that the arrangements in place are working satisfactorily whilst ensuring the health and safety of the home worker and those who may be affected by the work.

## **17. Stress Management**

- 17.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises that stress at work is a serious issue and that the following causes of stress at work need to be addressed from time to time:
- organisational function and culture;
  - role in organisation;
  - career development;
  - decision-making latitude/control over work;
  - interpersonal relationships at work;
  - home/work interface;
  - task design;
  - workload, pace and schedule.

- 17.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will do all it can to eradicate problems relating to stress at work. In particular it will:
- ensure close employee involvement, particularly during periods of change;
  - give opportunities for staff to contribute to the planning and organisation of their own jobs;
  - ensure staff have work targets that are stretching, but reasonable;
  - implement effective policies and procedures for dealing with bullying and any form of harassment;
  - encourage good communications between staff and management;
  - promote the maintenance of a supportive culture in the workplace;
  - where appropriate, take into consideration an employee's personal issues/problems at home;
  - discourage employees from working long and unsocial hours.
- 17.3 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that all policies, working practices, conditions of employment etc. do not contradict with the above statement.
- 17.4 Staff and volunteers should become aware of the causes of stress, and ensure that they do not work in a way which could cause them to suffer an increase in stress, nor cause an increase in stress on others.
- 17.5 Staff and volunteers must respect other workers, and ensure that interpersonal conflicts are avoided or dealt with sensibly.
- 17.6 Staff and volunteers must not make unrealistic demands of other workers, by imposing impossible deadlines and/or increasing others' workloads to a level they cannot cope with.
- 17.7 Staff and volunteers should participate with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's intention to maintain a co-operative, supportive workplace environment.
- 17.8 If an employee or volunteer is suffering from stress at work, they should discuss this with the Chief Executive Officer at the first opportunity. Where practicable and reasonable, Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will seek to provide assistance to the employee or volunteer.

## **18. Service User Health and Safety**

- 18.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire believes that service users are entitled to the provision of services in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. It will ensure that there are arrangements in place for the effective supervision of service users and for ensuring that activities take place in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.
- 18.2 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will promote good practice and ensure service users gain an appropriate understanding of health and safety, the identification and control of risk, and developing a set of safe behaviours.
- 18.3 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that there are arrangements in place for communicating, instructing and training service users in health and safety matters, and for their consultation and participation in health and safety matters, and for the review and evaluation of these arrangements.

- 18.4 These arrangements will include the review and adjustment of risk assessments and control measures where the service user has special needs, a disability, language or learning difficulty or is a young person.
- 18.5 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will notify employers, partner organisations and others (as appropriate) where there is an accident, incident or ill-health of a service user while they are participating in activities organised or provided by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- 18.6 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire adopts safe recruitment processes for staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, including criminal records checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service, as set out in the organisation's *Safeguarding Policy*.

## **19. Application**

- 19.1 This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment.
- 19.2 Responsibilities for maintaining manual and electronic files and records on health and safety will rest with the Chief Executive Officer.
- 19.3 These records shall include:
- copies of relevant correspondence with the appropriate authorities;
  - details of training provided (including copy certificates for staff and volunteers who have completed certificated courses);
  - health and safety risk assessments and fire risk assessments;
  - details of instruction and induction training provided.
- 19.4 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises its responsibility to assure funders and others that it has adequate health and safety arrangements in place, for reporting any accidents or incidents that may occur during activities that they may fund or be involved in and to assist in the review and monitoring of such incidents.
- 19.5 Employees breaching this policy (or interfering with the display of health and safety information) are likely to face disciplinary action in accordance with the *Disciplinary Policy*. Volunteers and directors breaching this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the *Volunteer Policy* and the *Governance Policy*, respectively.

## **20. Monitoring and Review**

- 20.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will ensure that risk assessments, control measures and health and safety procedures are reviewed to take account of changes in circumstances, accidents or incidents.
- 20.2 The Health and Safety Officer will report annually to the Board of Directors on the key issues associated with the implementation of this policy.
- 20.3 The effectiveness of this policy and procedure will be monitored and amended as and when necessary by the Chief Executive Officer. Significant changes will require the approval of the Board of Directors. The policy will also be reviewed every three years as part of a continuing review of organisational policies.