

VOLUNTEERING POLICY STATEMENT

1. Introduction

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire (HWCB) is the local champion for people using health and social care services. We work to ensure that local people's voices are heard in making important decisions about local NHS, social care and public health services. At HWCB we welcome volunteers to help us undertake our work and we will aim to involve a diverse range of volunteers from across the county, who are reflective of the local community. We will follow good practice in volunteer management, taking guidance from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and working closely with the volunteer support organisations in Central Bedfordshire.

2. Aim & Scope

For the purpose of this policy, a 'volunteer' is anyone who gives time, skills, energy and expertise to Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and to the benefit of the community of their own free will without pay or financial reward beyond reimbursement of expenses incurred whilst volunteering. The relationship Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire has with its volunteers is of a non-contractual nature and does not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a contractual or employment relationship. This policy includes Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Young Healthwatch (YHW) Volunteers and any special consideration to these volunteers will be stated specifically.

The policy aims to:

- Provide a reference document of principles to cover the aspects of attracting, recruiting, supporting, developing, managing and retaining volunteers as well as meeting their expectations and promoting voluntary activities.
- Ensure that volunteer involvement in Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is understood and accepted and there is clarity about why we involve volunteers.
- Provide volunteer with a rewarding, worthwhile and enjoyable experience by being given meaningful assignments, be treated as equals, receive effective support and guidance be fully involved and informed receive due recognition for tasks undertaken

3. Roles & Responsibilities

Volunteer roles descriptions are available to outline the types of volunteering opportunity available and are located in the HWCB '**Volunteer Role Descriptions**' document.

In return, volunteers will agree to carry out their tasks to the best of their abilities, to comply with the law relating to the organisations activities and services and to remain loyal to the aims, values, policies and procedures of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. All volunteers will be valued, Informed, involved and consulted.

VOLUNTEERING PRINCIPLES

4. Recruitment & Selection

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire aims to have a fair, effective and open process for recruiting and selecting a diverse range of volunteers that takes into account the principles of our **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy**. The aim of this process is to allow both parties to assess whether the volunteering opportunities available match the potential volunteer's skills, knowledge, experience and needs and preferences.

Selection process: -

- Opportunities will be advertised widely through the HWCB website, local volunteer centres and other or promotional material.
- All enquiries to volunteer will be followed up within 10 days.
- All applicants will be required to complete an application form (paper or online)
- Initial selection is by review of application forms, in line with the equal opportunity statement.
- Two satisfactory references must be received before applicants commence volunteering.
- All suitable applicants will be interviewed and will be advised of the outcome of the interview.
- Volunteers will be placed in roles that match their skills abilities and experience.
- All adult volunteers will be required to undergo an application for criminal records check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and this may be used to assess the volunteer's suitability for positions of trust.
- A potential volunteer will be encouraged to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process to the HWCB Engagement & Volunteer Officer / YHW Officer and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.
- Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position could lead to withdrawal of an offer to volunteer with the organisation. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire also undertakes to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of voluntary work.
Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar anyone from volunteering with the organisation. This will depend on the nature of the role and the circumstances and background of the offences. Cases of minor or spent convictions will be considered on an individual basis by the CEO.
- All volunteers will receive a copy of the **Volunteers' Handbook**, the **Volunteer Policy** and a copy of the '**Volunteer Role Description**' document.
- Applicants of all ages are welcome however the YHW age limitations are between

13 and 25 years of age. HWCB will seek to involve young people as volunteers ensuring that we have appropriate safeguarding measures in place as set out in the HWCB safeguarding policy and seek parental permission for all volunteers under 16 years of age.

5. Induction, Training, Development & Support

New volunteers will be made welcome and given a **Volunteer Induction Booklet**, including but not limited to:

- Brief description of the organisation and its values
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality and Data Protection (agreement) Policy
- Expenses Policy

Information contained in the pack will be discussed with the volunteer during the induction. An induction will be carried out once the volunteer joins HWCB/YHW that will outline expectations.

Volunteers will have access to training and development opportunities to enable them to fulfill their role within the organisation. They may request to attend any in-house or external training workshop or course where these can be shown to have a clear relevance to the voluntary work they are undertaking within the organisation, subject to the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

We recognise that volunteers should be given regular support to discuss problems or other issues and to be given thanks and feedback. The Engagement & Volunteer Officer / Young Engagement & Volunteer Officer will be the named people as their main source of support for volunteers during their voluntary work with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

There will be periodic reviews of the volunteer role and the tasks undertaken, including the extent to which these have met or can meet the needs of the volunteer and the organisation and consideration of the future contribution the volunteer can make.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises the contribution that volunteers make each year and will, wherever possible, promote the value of our volunteers on our website and through other media. They will be encouraged to be full participants in decision-making and the ongoing implementation of projects that involve them.

The relationship between Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that the organisation is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to the clients who use it. In consequence, volunteer workers are expected to be reliable and conscientious. When expecting to be absent when scheduled, volunteers should let Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire know as far in advance as

possible so that alternative arrangements may be made.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is happy to provide volunteers with references to enable them to undertake other volunteering opportunities or paid employment. This may be during or after their time with the organisation.

6. Dealing with Disagreements and Problems

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire will aim to deal with any difficulties with a volunteer in a fair, open and effective way. If a volunteer has a problem with the way they have been treated by another volunteer, member of staff, director or service user they should discuss the problem with the person concerned or raise it with the Engagement & Volunteer Officer / Young Engagement & Volunteer Officer with them and provided with support. If the matter is not resolved the volunteer can raise the problem with the Chief Executive Officer.

In the unlikely situation that a volunteer causes a problem through not following the guidelines of the organisation or by behaving inappropriately (see the Code of Conduct on what is unacceptable behaviour), The Chief Executive or the Chair will talk discreetly to the volunteer (and others if necessary) to establish the facts. We aim to resolve the matter quickly.

In the event of a serious complaint or inappropriate behaviour, we may decide on the appropriate action to take, which might include:

- further discussion with the volunteer
- closer supervision
- further training
- suspension or cessation of volunteering
- contacting an outside agency, such as the local authority Safeguarding Manager or the police (in the event of serious misconduct or where a criminal offence is suspected).

The organisation reserves the right to ask a volunteer to leave.

The volunteer will have the right to appeal to a specially convened appeal panel and may be accompanied by a friend, another volunteer or a member of staff. The panel will investigate the facts and decide on an appropriate response. They will inform the volunteer of what action they will take within 14 days of being told about the problem. The decision of the appeal panel will be final.

7. Expenses

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises that volunteering should be accessible to all regardless of income. Volunteers should not be out of pocket for doing their voluntary work on behalf of the organisation and are entitled to reimbursement of all reasonable expenses for travel to and from the office or a meeting, event or other activity (i.e. the cost of public transport fares or an agreed mileage rate). All receipts, other than for mileage, must be submitted using the HWCB Expenses Claim Form.

Any reimbursement for expenses is not a consideration for services and so is not subject to income tax or national insurance and does not affect a volunteer's

welfare benefits in any way.

8. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's **Equality and Diversity & Inclusion Policy** sets out the organisation's commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity in all areas of the organisation's work. The policy extends to our volunteers and sets out the way in which volunteers can expect to be treated by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. It also extends to the people our volunteers come into contact with when working for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire and sets out a number of individual responsibilities that our volunteers are required to comply with when volunteering. All volunteers are required to adhere to this policy.

9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers may obtain knowledge of a confidential nature about the work of the organisation, or about service users, volunteers, staff members, directors and partner organisations. There is an absolute obligation to maintain confidentiality in all these matters and not to pass on information to third parties unless required to do so by law.

We regard the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as important to the achievement of our objectives and to maintaining confidence between those with whom we deal and ourselves. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire therefore aims to ensure that we protect the rights of the individual and that no personal information is collected, retained or passed to a third party without their knowledge and consent.

Volunteers are also responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed as a volunteer, whether this information relates to individuals, third party organisations or to the activities of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. Further details are contained in Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy. All volunteers are required to adhere to this policy.

10. Health & Safety

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire Health and Safety policy is part of your induction pack and you have a duty to ensure you comply with the policy.

In accordance with the commitments set out in Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's **Health & Safety Policy**, we will provide such equipment, information, instruction, training and support as is necessary to secure the safety and health of all our volunteers and of others who may be affected by their actions, including members of the public.

11. Insurance

Volunteers with Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire are fully protected by the organisation's insurance (Public and Employer's Liability Insurance)

If a volunteer sustains an injury whilst they are engaged in voluntary work on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's behalf and if Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire is held to be responsible, then the volunteer will be covered under the terms of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's Employers' Liability insurance policy. However, this Employers' Liability policy will not indemnify against any liability in respect of which compulsory insurance or security is required under the Road Traffic 1988.

Where a volunteer uses their car for volunteering, whether or not they claim for the journey, they must make sure that their car insurer is aware of the circumstances. The volunteer is required to ensure that their insurance covers the use of the vehicle not just for the normal 'social, domestic and pleasure purposes' but also for use by the volunteer when volunteering. Most insurers do not charge any extra premium for volunteers using their cars to assist a charity or community organisation. However, if a volunteer fails to notify their insurer regarding such use, then the insurance policy can be invalidated and the driver could be held personally liable for any damage or injuries sustained in an accident.

12. Leaving the Organisation

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire recognises that volunteers give their time freely and that their circumstances and availability may alter, resulting in them leaving the organisation. Volunteers have the right to leave at any time; however, to assist with ensuring continuity of service, we would welcome as much notice as possible. If you would like to have a conversation on leaving we would welcome your feedback.

13. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy, and its procedures, will be monitored and amended as and when necessary, by the Volunteer Involvement Group and the Chief Executive Officer. Significant changes will require the approval of the Board. The policy will also be reviewed periodically as part of a continuing review of organisational policies.