

# Healthwatch Cambridgeshire Volunteer Involvement Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is a 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.
- 1.2. At Healthwatch Cambridgeshire 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.
- 1.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will follow good practice volunteer management principles, taking guidance from NCVO Volunteering and working closely with the local Volunteer Centres in Cambridgeshire

## 2. Aims of the Volunteering Policy

- 2.1. To set out the principles and working practices for volunteer involvement in Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and ensure that best practice is followed.
- 2.2. To provide a reference document which will cover all aspects of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's relationship with volunteers for everyone who is concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers and promoting voluntary activities.
- 2.3. To ensure that volunteer involvement in Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is understood and accepted by paid staff, volunteers and Board members and there is clarity about why we involve volunteers.

## 3. What is volunteering?

- 3.1. Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy freely given for the benefit of the community, and can take many forms. It is undertaken by choice, without concern for financial gain.

## 4. Why Healthwatch Cambridgeshire involves volunteers

- 4.1. Volunteers bring a variety of skills and a fresh perspective. They can offer time and passion to a particular project, adding value to our work and supporting our sustainability.
- 4.2. Volunteers have knowledge of their local communities; by involving volunteers Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is able to build stronger links with the local community.

- 4.3. Volunteers act as ambassadors, promoting Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's activities and services. This is a unique role, different to that of paid workers, who they do not replace.
- 4.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work

## 5. Who can volunteer?

- 5.1. Everyone has the right to volunteer without experiencing discrimination, and Healthwatch Cambridgeshire has a responsibility to treat volunteers fairly.
- 5.2. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will recruit, support and manage volunteers in line with our Equality & Diversity Policy, to ensure that individuals will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, race, sex, religion or cultural beliefs, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity.
- 5.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recognises barriers to volunteering for individuals from different sections of the community, both physical and psychological, and we will monitor our volunteer involvement practices continuously, to ensure that we are inclusive of all sections of the community.
  - 5.3.1. **Young volunteers** - Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will seek to involve children & young people as volunteers, ensuring that we have appropriate safeguarding measures in place as per our Children's Safeguarding Policy and seek parental permission for all volunteers under 16 years.
  - 5.3.2. **Disabled volunteers** - Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will work positively with disabled volunteers and will ask all potential volunteers if they require any adjustments to support them in their volunteering role as part of the application process. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will make reasonable adjustments to volunteering roles and available support, within currently available resources.
  - 5.3.3. **Volunteers on benefits** - Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will promote volunteering to individuals on means tested benefits and provide a copy of the Department of Work & Pensions guide "[volunteering while getting benefits](#)" to any volunteer or potential volunteer who informs us that they are on means tested benefits.  
Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is aware of the requirement for volunteers on jobseekers allowance to be available for work; to be free to go to an interview with 48 hours' notice and to be able to start work within one week of being given notice.
  - 5.3.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recognises that many individuals have criminal records with spent or minor convictions and are reluctant to apply for voluntary work where this would involve disclosure of their record. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire welcomes applicants

from individuals who may have minor or spent convictions and will promote this as part of the volunteer application process.

- 5.3.5. **Volunteers from overseas** - Healthwatch Cambridgeshire welcomes volunteers from overseas who have the legal right to undertake voluntary work as part of their immigration status in the UK.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire can provide potential overseas volunteers with a copy of the NCVO Volunteering Information Sheet [“Accepting Volunteers from outside the UK”](#), Volunteering England 2012 for guidance on whether they are eligible to volunteer but this is not a substitute for immigration or legal advice.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recommends that individuals check their right to volunteer with the [UK Border Agency](#), in order not to jeopardise their immigration status.

- 5.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recognises that not all individuals will have the skills & experience, or be eligible for every volunteering role. Where this occurs and we have no other suitable opportunities available, we will signpost individuals to their local Volunteer Centre for additional support.

## **6. What can people get from volunteering with us?**

- 6.1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recognises that volunteering is a two way process with volunteers giving their time to help and in return gaining some benefits for themselves.
- 6.2. Volunteering for Healthwatch Cambridgeshire can provide new challenges and help people learn new skills.
- 6.3. Volunteering for Healthwatch Cambridgeshire can be a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will support volunteers on this journey by providing references to those who have completed a volunteering project or volunteered for three months or more.
- 6.4. Volunteering can provide an opportunity to meet new people and be involved with something personally rewarding.

## **7. Planning for Volunteer involvement**

- 7.1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recognises the importance of planning volunteer involvement as an integral part of the development of operational activities; acknowledging the requisite investment of staff time and other resources needed.
- 7.2. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will seek to develop a range of imaginative volunteering opportunities, both short and long term, and will regularly review these to ensure that it is involving a diverse range of volunteers from across the county, who are reflective of the local community.

- 7.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will develop a role description for each volunteering opportunity, using a standardised format, see Appendix 1.
- 7.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will ensure that volunteers are insured for any planned volunteering activities and will risk assess each role, to plan what training, support and recruitment methodology is required.
- 7.5. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will budget to ensure that volunteers receive training, support and out of pocket expenses in line with section 10 of this policy.

## **8. Recruitment and selection**

- 8.1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will use an open and fair recruitment process for each volunteering role, which will be outlined to potential volunteers in advance.
- 8.2. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will promote volunteering opportunities through a variety of advertising methods, to ensure that the opportunity is promoted to a wide range of potential volunteers.
- 8.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will only ask for the information needed to ensure that someone is suitable for the role they have applied for. All information given by volunteer applicants will be treated confidentially in line with the Confidentiality Policy.
- 8.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will make reasonable adjustments where possible, to meet the access needs of potential volunteers.
- 8.5. Volunteers will be selected and screened for suitability through one or more of the following methods, dependent on the role:
  - 8.5.1 Completed application form for all volunteer roles.
  - 8.5.2 Informal or formal interview, depending on the requirements of the volunteer role.
  - 8.5.3 References - all volunteers are required to give the names of 2 people who can be approached for personal references. Acceptable referees should have known the potential volunteer for at least 1 year and cannot include family members.
  - 8.5.4 If the role involves regulated activities in relation to Vulnerable Adults or Children, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will ensure that the volunteer has a Disclosure and Barring Service check, in line with our Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults and Children's Safeguarding Policies.

## **9. Induction, training and ongoing support**

- 9.1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will provide an induction and appropriate ongoing training for volunteers, relative to their volunteering role, so that they are prepared for the tasks allocated to them, e.g. safeguarding, equality and diversity training, confidentiality, health & safety, etc.

- 9.2. A volunteer handbook will be provided for new volunteers as part of their induction training, which will include information relative to their volunteering role, e.g. volunteer role description, staff contact details, safeguarding contact information, information on claiming volunteer expenses, training log, volunteering and benefits, etc.
- 9.3. All volunteers will have a named individual as their main point of contact and will be provided with appropriate support; this could be through one to ones with a staff member or peer support, as appropriate to the role. This will provide volunteers with the opportunity to feedback on the progress of their volunteering role, discuss any personal development needs appropriate to their volunteering or talk about any problems. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity of an annual development review meeting.
- 9.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will seek to involve volunteers as partners in project development decision making processes, for example through project meetings.
- 9.5. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will ensure that volunteers will receive appropriate recognition for their contribution to Healthwatch Cambridgeshire in the form of thanks for volunteering activities undertaken; this may include volunteer certificates, low value items or thank you activities.

## **10. Volunteer Expenses**

- 10.1. As part of its commitment to ensuring equity of access to volunteering opportunities, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is committed to paying pre-agreed out of pocket expenses to volunteers, that are incurred solely in undertaking the volunteering role.
- 10.2. Volunteer expense claims will only be paid for actual expenses incurred as evidenced by receipts, using a standard claim form.
- 10.3. Expenses will be re-imbursed to volunteers as soon as possible, not in excess of 15 working days, with payment by cheque.
- 10.4. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will ask volunteers to choose the most cost effective method of travelling to and from / or parking at any volunteering activities, taking advantage of concessionary travel rates where applicable.
- 10.5. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will ask volunteers who use their own motor vehicle for travel relating to their volunteering, if they are taxed, insured, have an MOT (if appropriate) and that they have informed their insurance company of their volunteer driving, before any expense claims are paid. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire reserves the right to check that this documentation is in place before payment of expense claims is made. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire can provide a template letter to volunteers for their insurance companies if required.

10.6. **Mileage rates for volunteers** will be paid at a rate approved by the Board and not in excess of [HM Revenue & Customs guidelines](#), to ensure that volunteers do not receive taxable profit from their volunteering activities. These rates will be reviewed annually in March, to ensure that they do not exceed HM Revenue & Customs approved rates.

10.6.1. **Motor vehicle:** volunteers can claim 45p per mile on the first 10,000 miles in the tax year (1<sup>st</sup> April - 31st March) and 25p per mile for any mileage over that amount.

10.6.2. **Motor cycles:** volunteers can claim 24p per mile.

10.6.3. **Cycles:** volunteers can claim 20p per mile.

10.6.4. **Passenger miles:** volunteers can claim 5p per mile for carrying fellow volunteers in a car or van on journeys that are volunteering journeys. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will not set up car share arrangements between volunteers, however these can be informally arranged between volunteers who are attending the same volunteering activity.

10.6.5. **Car parking:** Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will refund parking costs for any volunteering activities; receipts must be attached to the submitted claim form.

10.6.6. **Public transport:** Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will refund the cost of bus tickets for volunteering activities.

Volunteers may claim the cost of standard rail travel only and journeys should be booked in advance if possible, so the cheapest standard ticket is available.

Receipts for journeys on public transport must be attached to the submitted claim form.

10.7. **Refreshments:** if volunteers are attending a function of between 3 and 4 hours, a refreshments allowance of up to £2 is claimable, if no refreshments are provided at the event. For more than 4 hours, a lunch allowance of up to £6 is claimable. For more than 8 hours, a further meal allowance of £6 can be claimed.

10.8. **Caring costs:** if it is essential for a volunteer to incur additional carer costs in order to volunteer, then an evidenced claim can be submitted on the following conditions: care is for a child or children under 16 years of age; or where there is a proven medical or social need. A claim is not payable if care is provided by a member of the volunteer's household; or where "no cost" care is provided by another individual, body or organisation.

10.9. **Pre-approved incidental expenses** may be reclaimed where solely relevant to the business of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire.

## 11. Dealing with problems

11.1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire aims to make volunteering a positive experience for volunteers and the organisation, but recognises that sometimes, for all sorts of reasons, problems can occur.

- 11.2. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will have a clear and fair problem solving process for volunteers to help resolve any issues at the earliest opportunity. This process is only for dealing with concerns around the volunteering relationship; for other concerns or complaints please refer to the Complaints Policy.
- 11.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will make reasonable adjustments within the organisations resources to ensure that volunteers can engage fully in the problem solving process.
- 11.4. Volunteers may bring a support person or advocate to any meeting that forms part of the problem solving process.
- 11.5. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire recognises that problems can occur on either side of the volunteering relationship.
- 11.5.1. Problems a volunteer could experience with what Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is doing, could include:
- feeling they are not being given adequate training and support to undertaken their volunteering role
  - feeling they have been asked to do tasks that they don't want to do
  - feeling they are not being treated fairly by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire staff or other volunteers.
- (This list is not exhaustive)
- 11.5.2. Problems Healthwatch Cambridgeshire could experience with a volunteer could include:
- not doing the tasks Healthwatch Cambridgeshire has asked them to do, or taking on tasks outside their agreed volunteer role
  - not following Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's policies and guidelines
  - behaving in a way that falls outside the volunteers' code of conduct
  - being unreliable and not telling us why
  - misuse or theft of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's resources.
- (This list is not exhaustive)
- 11.6. **Dealing with Volunteers' concerns**
- 11.6.1. **Informal:** Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will work with volunteers to resolve any concerns that the volunteer has informally through ongoing support as detailed in section 9.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will encourage volunteers to resolve any issues through this informal process in the first instance.
- 11.6.2. If the volunteer's concern is not resolved to their satisfaction through this informal process, or their concern is with the person who provides their one to one support, they can notify the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) via email, letter or a telephone conversation.
- 11.6.3. **Formal:** The CEO or their nominated representative should acknowledge the concern in writing (or in the volunteer's preferred method of communication) within 3 working days.

- 11.6.4. The CEO or their nominated representative will offer the volunteer a meeting to listen to their concerns and attempt to resolve them within 15 working days of the meeting. Exceptionally further time will be needed; where possible this will be agreed with the volunteer.
- 11.6.5. If the volunteer wishes, the concerns can be discussed via telephone, letter or email instead of a meeting, but this may extend the period of time for resolution of the issues beyond the 15 working days.
- 11.6.6. **Appeal:** If the volunteer does not agree with the outcome of the formal stage, they may raise their concern with the Board of Directors.
- 11.6.7. The Board of Directors will acknowledge this appeal within 5 working days by the volunteer's preferred method of communication and offer an appeal meeting to listen to the volunteer's concerns and review the outcome of the decision, to ensure that the organisation's policies & procedures have been followed correctly.
- 11.6.8. The Board of Directors will notify the volunteer of their response within 10 working days of this meeting. Exceptionally further time will be needed; this will be agreed with the volunteer in advance where possible.
- 11.6.9. The Board's decision is final.

## 11.7. Dealing with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's concerns

- 11.7.1. **Informal:** Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will work with volunteers to resolve any concerns informally through ongoing support as detailed in section 9.3.
- 11.7.2. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will tell volunteers about any problems regarding their volunteering at the earliest opportunity.
- 11.7.3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will agree with the volunteer how it can support them to move forward in their volunteering role. If appropriate volunteers will be offered additional training, extra learning time or agree a change in their volunteering role.
- 11.7.4. If the above process does not resolve the problem, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will offer the volunteer a formal meeting to discuss this.
- 11.7.5. There are some occasions where Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will not be able to offer any support or the opportunity for volunteers to change their behaviour or practice; while not a complete list, this may include:
  - Threats, abuse or attacks on any staff, volunteers or customers
  - Breaking Healthwatch Cambridgeshire policies on safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults
  - Breaking confidentiality
  - Criminal acts against Healthwatch Cambridgeshire, such as theft.
- 11.7.6. **Formal:** The CEO or their nominated representative will offer the volunteer a meeting to talk through the organisations concerns



with the volunteer. They will explain what the issues are and outline their impact. The CEO will explore with the volunteer if there are any other opportunities to resolve the concerns and notify the volunteer of their decision within 15 working days.

- 11.7.7. If Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is unable to agree a resolution with the volunteer, the CEO may ask the volunteer to stop volunteering for the organisation.
- 11.7.8. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will signpost volunteers to the Volunteer Centres for other opportunities, if the organisation is unable to continue supporting an individual as a volunteer.
- 11.7.9. Appeal: If the volunteer does not agree with the outcome of the formal stage, they may raise their concern with the Board of Directors.
- 11.7.10. The Board of Directors will acknowledge this appeal within 5 working days by the volunteer's preferred method of communication and offer an appeal meeting to listen to the volunteer's concerns and review the outcome of the decision, to ensure that the organisation's policies & procedures have been followed correctly.
- 11.7.11. The Board of Directors will notify the volunteer of their response within 10 working days of this meeting. Exceptionally further time will be needed; this will be agreed with the volunteer in advance where possible.
- 11.7.12. The Board's decision is final.

## **12. When a volunteer's involvement with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire ends**

12.1 A volunteer's role with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire may end for a variety of reasons. The volunteering may come to an end at the request of either the volunteer or Healthwatch Cambridgeshire, for example the volunteer may no longer be able to fulfil the role, they may leave the area, their availability may be too limited, the role may no longer meet the volunteer's needs. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire may no longer be able to offer the volunteering role which interests the volunteer, and as detailed above, the volunteering may come to an end as the result of a dispute between the volunteer and Healthwatch Cambridgeshire

12.2 Whatever the circumstances, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will formally acknowledge the end of the volunteering relationship:

- A member of the team will send the volunteer a letter within 15 working days of being notified that the volunteering is ending.
- The letter will acknowledge the time that the volunteer has spent supporting Healthwatch Cambridgeshire.
- Whenever appropriate, the letter should also thank the volunteer for their support.
- The volunteer will be offered a meeting with a member of staff in order for the organisation to learn from the volunteer's experience of supporting

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire, and whenever appropriate to offer the volunteer any relevant and reasonable support that the volunteer may wish, to find an alternative volunteering role. For example, put them in touch with a local Volunteer Centre, referring them to a different Healthwatch (if leaving the area), or local volunteer using organisation.

- If appropriate the volunteer should be reminded that they can seek references from Healthwatch Cambridgeshire
- The conversation should also clarify and whenever possible, facilitate any ongoing relationship the volunteer may wish to have with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire. For example, the volunteer may wish to continue to be kept informed in which case they should continue to be on appropriate mailing lists (ie, for newsletters, consultation network). Otherwise, the volunteer's details should be removed.
- Healthwatch Cambridgeshire should ensure that all documentation relating to the volunteer is updated with the date the volunteering has ended, and their details removed from any volunteering database/lists
- Any outstanding expenses will be paid within 14 working days of receipt of a claim being submitted

12.3 Healthwatch Cambridgeshire staff will ensure that the volunteer:

- Returns all property belonging to Healthwatch Cambridgeshire which may have been loaned to the volunteer to assist them in their volunteering role, to the office
- Returns all identity badges to the office
- Completes and submits any outstanding expenses claim within a month of stopping volunteering, if possible sooner.

**Approved by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire Board of Directors**

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016

**Next Review**

Date: March 2017

**Responsible Officer**

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire

**Appendix 1 - Pro-forma role description**

*(Example role description. This can be expanded to take up as much space as required)*

**Role title:**

**Purpose of this volunteer role:**

**Main tasks:**

**Skills and experience needed:**

**When:**

**Where:**

### What support will be give you?

We will provide you with an induction training, which will include the following:

- Introduction to Healthwatch Cambridgeshire
- Health & Safety
- Adult & or Children's safeguarding
- Equality and diversity training
- Data protection training
- Presentation skills
- Listening & Reporting skills

We will offer support, which could include telephone, email support as well as regular meetings to check that your volunteering is going well.

### What can you get out of this volunteering role?

- You will get the opportunity to meet new people
- Find out about local care services
- Help change care services for the better
- Learn new skills that can help you improve your CV
- We can provide you with a reference for further employment or training opportunities if you volunteer for 6+ months.

### How to apply:

Please complete an application form, available from our website at [www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk) or from the office at:

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire,  
The Maple Centre, 6 Oak Drive,  
Huntingdon,  
PE29 7HN

[enquiries@healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk)

For more information about this role speak any of our co-ordinators