

Investors in Volunteers

Purpose

1. This report provides an overview of the recent award of the Investors in Volunteers quality mark.

Key issues

2. We decided that as an organisation Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough should seek to work towards quality assurance accreditation for its work with volunteers. This would ensure that we were working to a recognised set of standards with safe policies and good working practice which would give confidence to both existing and potential volunteers.
3. The Investors in Volunteers quality mark, by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) was the programme which we selected as being the most appropriate for our organisation. The programme is widely recognised and allows us to display the Investors in Volunteers quality mark on all our literature.

Action required by the Board

The Board is asked to:

- Note the report

Author

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1 September 2020

What we needed to do to obtain Investors in Volunteers

4. Upon signing the contract to undertake the award, we committed to completing all of the work necessary to pass an assessment within a 12 month period. We were assessed upon nine indicators¹ which examined our processes for working with volunteers, including how the work of our volunteers interfaces with the organisation as a whole.
5. Our Volunteer Manager created an action plan to look at how we already met individual points within the descriptors, providing links to relevant documents and policies, to allow us to identify additional work needed. This involved making amendments to a number of our existing policies including our Volunteering Policy.
6. We involved our volunteers from an early stage in the process of working towards the award, speaking to them at volunteer meetings and asking them to complete a questionnaire to give their feedback on their experience of volunteering with us.

Assessment Process

7. Upon submitting our completed action plan to our nominated Investors in Volunteers assessor, we were informed that, subject to a full assessment, the information we had provided suggested that we fully met all nine of the performance indicators and an assessment date was set for July 2020.
8. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were offered the opportunity for assessment to be carried out remotely, using the online platform Zoom. We were also able to accept a much earlier assessment date in April 2020.
9. The assessment consisted of a number of interviews, including talking to 13 of our volunteers who were randomly selected by the assessor, also six members of staff and the Chair of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Our organisational policies, procedures and other documentation relating to the volunteers were also examined in greater detail.
10. Following assessment we received verbal notification that we had provisionally passed, fully meeting the requirements of all nine descriptors, subject to the decision being verified by a panel meeting in July 2020. We received a draft report detailing examples of good practice with quotes from our volunteers, which listed three suggestions for development:

¹ https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/images/iiv_Standard_August_2019.pdf

- Healthwatch could undertake further equality and diversity training as already identified, which may help to ensure that everyone in the organisation is aware of issues around equality and diversity and help to improve volunteers knowledge and skills when performing their roles engaging with diverse communities
 - Healthwatch could undertake outreach as identified to involve more young people in relation to volunteer diversity, so that in turn more young peoples voices can be heard about health services.
 - Healthwatch could identify what skills volunteers bring and consider whether there are other activities they may be able to undertake. This may help to increase volunteer motivation as well as bring greater capacity into Healthwatch.
11. We have incorporated work based on these suggestions into our objectives and interim work plan for the remainder of the year.

Following award of Investors in Volunteers

12. We received formal notification that we had passed the assessment for Investors in Volunteers and were sent a final report. We will utilise the report received including the suggestions for development to continue to develop the work we do with our volunteers, including our recruitment and induction processes.
13. Our volunteers have told us that they enjoyed and valued being included in the process of gaining the award.
14. The Investors in Volunteers award lasts for three years, following which we would need to apply to be re-assessed.
15. Following notification of our award, we were approached by Investors in Volunteers who requested that they could publish a case study following their positive experience of working with us. This was published on their website².
16. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough currently has 36 active volunteers in addition to our Directors who also give their time on a voluntary basis. We do not currently have any volunteers in East Cambridgeshire and will focus on this area once we re-commence active recruitment.

² <https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/news/923-iiv-case-study-healthwatch-cambridgeshire-peterborough>

Region	Total number of vols excluding Directors	No. of Directors
Cambridge	4	1
S Cambs	5	2
E Cambs	0	0
Hunts	10	0
Fenland	4	1
Peterborough	13	4
TOTAL	36	8

17. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has meant we are unable to carry out face to face engagement at present, our volunteers are attending monthly face to face team meetings and assisting us in a number of projects which allow them to work remotely, including an audit of local GP websites.