

# Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

## Volunteering Policy

### 1. Introduction

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (HC&P) 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 Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 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 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

### 2. Aims of the Volunteering Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the principles and working practices for volunteer involvement and ensure that best practice is followed.
- Provide a reference document which will cover all aspects of our relationship with volunteers for everyone who is concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers, their expectations and promoting voluntary activities.
- Ensure that volunteer involvement in Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is understood and accepted and there is clarity about why we involve volunteers.

### 3. What is volunteering?

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 and Peterborough involves volunteers

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.
- They have knowledge of their local communities. By involving volunteers, HC&P is able to build stronger links with local communities.
- They act as ambassadors, promoting HC&Ps activities and services. This is a unique role, different to that of paid workers, who they do not replace.
- 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?

HC&P has a responsibility to treat all volunteers equally and fairly and will recruit, support and manage volunteers in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy. We recognise barriers to volunteering for individuals from different sections of the community and will monitor our volunteer involvement practices to ensure that we are inclusive of all sections of the community.

- **Young volunteers** - HC&P will seek to involve children and young people as volunteers, ensuring that we have appropriate safeguarding measures in place as set out in our Children's Safeguarding Policy and seek parental permission for all volunteers under 16 years.
- **People with disabilities** - HC&P will work positively with volunteers that may have disabilities and will ask all potential volunteers if they require any adjustments to support them in their volunteering role as part of the application process. HC&P will make reasonable adjustments to volunteering roles and available support within available resources.
- **People in receipt of benefits** - HC&P 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 in receipt of means tested benefits.
- HC&P is aware that there may be requirements for volunteers 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.
- **Volunteers with minor or spent convictions.** HC&P 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. HC&P welcomes applications from individuals who may have minor or spent convictions and will promote this as part of the volunteer application process. These cases will be considered by the CEO and Communities Programme Manager on an individual basis, taking into account the nature and severity of conviction and length of time. We will also take due note of guidance from the NCVO on this matter.
- **Volunteers from overseas** - HC&P welcomes volunteers from overseas who have the legal right to undertake voluntary work as part of their immigration status in the UK and 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. This is not a substitute for immigration or legal advice and we recommend that individuals check their right to volunteer with the [UK Border Agency](#), in order not to jeopardise their immigration status.

HC&P recognises that not all individuals will have the skills & experience required, nor be eligible for every volunteering role. In these instances, and where we have no other suitable opportunities available, we will signpost individuals to their local volunteer support organisation for additional support.

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

HC&P recognises that volunteering is a two-way process; with volunteers giving their time to help and in return gaining some benefits for themselves including

- providing an opportunity to meet new people and be involved with something personally rewarding.
- helping people learn new skills and providing a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities. HC&P will support volunteers by providing references to those who have completed a volunteering project or volunteered for 20 hours or more.

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

HC&P 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. We will seek to develop a range of volunteering opportunities, both short and long term.

A role description will be developed for each volunteering opportunity using a standardised format, see Appendix 1.

HC&P 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.

## **8. Recruitment and selection**

HC&P will: -

- use an open and fair recruitment process for each volunteering role, which will be outlined to potential volunteers in advance.
- promote volunteering opportunities through a variety of advertising methods to ensure that the opportunity is promoted to a wide range of potential volunteers.
- 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.
- make reasonable adjustments where possible, to meet the access needs of potential volunteers.

Volunteers will be selected and screened for suitability through one or more of the following methods, dependent on the role:

- Completed application form for all volunteer roles.
- Informal or formal interview.
- 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.
- In line with our Safeguarding Adults Safeguarding Policy, if the role involves regulated activities in relation to Vulnerable Adults, HC&P will ensure that the volunteer has a Disclosure and Baring Service check.

If an applicant is not suited to the volunteering role, the reasons will be explained to the applicant.

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

HC&P will provide an induction and appropriate ongoing training for volunteers, relative to their role, so that they are prepared for the tasks allocated to them. This training will include safeguarding, equality and diversity, confidentiality, health and safety, etc. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity to complete accredited safeguarding adults training and invited to update this training every three years.

A volunteer handbook will be provided as part of induction training, which will include information relative to their volunteering role, e.g. role description, staff contact details, safeguarding contact information, claiming expenses, training log and other useful information.

All volunteers will have a named individual as their main point of contact and will be provided with appropriate support. This will provide the opportunity to feedback on the progress of their role, discuss any personal development needs or talk about any problems. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity of an annual development review meeting.

HC&P will seek to involve volunteers as partners in project development. At an early stage in their induction new volunteers will be introduced to all members of the Engagement Team and other members of staff who they are likely to work alongside.

HC&P will ensure that volunteers will receive appropriate recognition for their contribution in the form of thanks for volunteering activities undertaken which may include volunteer certificates, low value gifts or 'thank you' activities.

## **10. Personal Safety**

All volunteers are expected to follow safe practice guidelines, as described in the volunteer handbook and lone working policy.

Volunteers will not be asked to attend meetings at the home of a member of staff or another volunteer, nor will members of staff attend meetings at a volunteer's home

Members of staff are not to provide transportation for volunteers to events or meetings. Staff will not arrange car sharing for volunteers. Volunteers are not obliged to provide transportation for other volunteers.

## 11. Volunteer Expenses

As part of its commitment to ensuring equity of access to volunteering opportunities, HC&P is committed to paying pre-agreed out of pocket expenses to volunteers that are incurred solely in undertaking the volunteering role.

Volunteer expense claims will only be paid for actual expenses incurred as evidenced by receipts, using a standard claim form. Expenses will be reimbursed to volunteers as soon as possible, by direct payment to the bank account held on record.

HC&P 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 available.

HC&P 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. We reserve the right to check that this documentation is in place before payment of expense claims is made. A template letter to volunteers for their insurance companies can be provided if required.

**Travel expenses 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.

- **Motor vehicle:** volunteers can claim 45p per mile on the first 10,000 miles in the tax year (1<sup>st</sup> April - 31<sup>st</sup> March) and 25p per mile for any mileage over that amount. Please collect VAT receipts for petrol to support mileage claims.
- **Motor cycles:** volunteers can claim 24p per mile.
- **Cycles:** volunteers can claim 20p per mile.
- **Car parking:** parking costs will be refunded for any volunteering activities; receipts must be attached to the submitted claim form.
- **Public transport:** the cost of bus tickets for volunteering activities will be refunded.
- 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.

**Refreshments:** if volunteers are attending a function of between 2 and 4 hours, a refreshments allowance of up to £2.50 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.

**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. Care costs must be discussed and agreed in advance.

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

### **Dealing with problems**

HC&P aims to make volunteering a positive experience for volunteers and the organisation, but recognises that sometimes problems can occur on either side of the volunteering relationship. HC&P has a clear and fair problem solving process for dealing with concerns around the volunteering relationship; for other concerns or complaints please refer to the Complaints Policy.

Volunteers may bring a support person or advocate to any meeting that forms part of the problem solving process.

### **Dealing with Volunteers' concerns**

- **Informal:** Volunteers are encouraged to work with HC&P to resolve any concerns through ongoing support as detailed in section 9 above.
- **Formal:** The CEO or their nominated representative will:
  - acknowledge the concern in the volunteer's preferred method of communication within 3 working days.
  - offer a meeting to listen to concerns and attempt to resolve them within 15 working days. Exceptionally further time will be needed; where possible this will be agreed with the volunteer.
  - 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.
- **Appeal:** If the volunteer does not agree with the outcome of the formal stage, they may raise their concern with the Board of Directors who will:
  - acknowledge the appeal within 5 working days in the volunteer's preferred method of communication
  - offer an appeal meeting to listen to the volunteer's concerns

- review the outcome of the decision.
- notify the volunteer of their response within 15 working days. Exceptionally further time will be needed; this will be agreed with the volunteer in advance where possible.
- The Board's decision is final.

### **Dealing with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's concerns**

- **Informal:** HC&P will: -
  - work with volunteers to resolve any concerns informally through ongoing support as detailed in Section 9 above.
  - tell volunteers about any problems regarding their volunteering at the earliest opportunity.
  - agree with the volunteer how it can support them to progress in their volunteering role. If appropriate volunteers will be offered additional training, extra learning time or agree a change in their volunteering role.
  - If the above process does not resolve the problem, HC&P will offer the volunteer a formal meeting to discuss this.
  - There are some occasions where HC&P 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 members of the public
    - Breaching our policies on safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults
    - Criminal acts against HC&P, such as theft
    - Any serious breach of the Volunteer Agreement
- **Formal:** The CEO or their nominated representative will offer the volunteer a meeting to talk through the organisation's concerns and explain what the issues are, outlining their impact. The CEO will explore with the volunteer if there are any other opportunities to resolve the concerns and notify their decision within 15 working days.
- If HC&P is unable to agree a resolution with the volunteer, the CEO may ask the volunteer to stop volunteering for the organisation.
- **Appeal:** If the volunteer does not agree with the outcome of the formal stage, they may raise their concern with the Board of Directors who will:
  - acknowledge the 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.
  - notify the volunteer of their decision within 15 working days of this meeting. Exceptionally further time will be needed; this will be agreed with the volunteer in advance where possible.
  - The Board's decision is final.

### **13. When a volunteer's involvement with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ends**

A volunteer's role with HC&P may end for a variety of reasons. Whatever the circumstances, HC&P will formally acknowledge the end of the volunteering relationship:

- A member of the team will send the volunteer a letter within 15 working days, acknowledging the time that the volunteer has spent supporting HC&P
- 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 their experience.
- When appropriate, staff will offer the volunteer reasonable support to find an alternative volunteering role.
- If appropriate the volunteer should be reminded that they can seek references.
- The conversation should also clarify and whenever possible, facilitate any ongoing relationship the volunteer may wish to have with HC&P.
- HC&P 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

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough staff will ensure that the volunteer:

- Returns all property which may have been loaned to the volunteer to the office
- Returns all identity badges to the office
- Completes and submits any outstanding expenses claim within a month, if possible, sooner.

**Approved by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board of Directors**

13<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**Responsible Officer**

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

**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 we give you?

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

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

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

## 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 have completed a project or volunteered for at least 20 hours

## How to apply:

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

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough,  
The Maple Centre, 6 Oak Drive,  
Huntingdon,  
PE29 7HN  
0330 355 1285

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

For more information about this role speak to a member of our team.