

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Code of Conduct

1. Policy statement

1.1

This code of conduct sets out the expectations Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has of all those who work or carry out activities for it, in a voluntary or paid capacity, including employees and volunteers. For ease of reference, these parties will be called representatives throughout the rest of the document.

1.2

In carrying out our work, we adhere to the **Nolan Principles of Public Life**, which establish the standards of ethical behaviour expected of individuals involved in public service. The seven principles, **selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership**, require individuals to act solely in the public interest, avoid placing themselves under obligations that could influence their work, make decisions impartially and on merit, and be accountable and transparent in their actions. We expect all staff, volunteers, trustees, and anyone representing the organisation to demonstrate these principles in their conduct and to actively promote and uphold these standards in their work.

1.3

Everyone who represents Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is expected to behave professionally and in support of our values outlined below.

1.4

Our values

- a) **Independence** – we will be independent from the Local Authorities and all health and social care services, providers and commissioners, whether public or private.

- b) **User-focus** – we will relentlessly champion the voice of local people, patient and service user in the health and social care system.
- c) **Inclusivity** – we will work with the many different patient and service user groups across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- d) **Respect** – we respect the opinion and experience of all people and work collaboratively with all groups, networks and organisations to pursue common goals.
- e) **Credibility** – local people, commissioners and partners will be able to trust the reliability of information, the ability to influence and the evidence underpinning our work.
- f) **Transparency** – we will be open, transparent and accountable in all we do.

2. Compliance with law

2.1

All those who represent Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are required to abide by relevant laws and regulations, including those relating to the environment, health and safety, discrimination, disability and employment.

2.2

Representatives will be ethical and responsible whenever dealing with company finances, the services we deliver, partnership and collaborative working and public image. Representatives will inform the Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Chair or CEO immediately of any possible or actual infringement.

2.3

When reporting concerns, every effort will be made to keep the source of information confidential although this cannot be guaranteed if further action is necessary.

3. Conflict of interest

3.1

Representatives will complete a declaration of interest form when they join Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and ensure it is kept up to date.

3.2

Representatives are expected to maintain professional boundaries in their working relationships with each other, and external parties such as commissioners and providers.

4. Serving the public

4.1

Representatives will always perform their duties to the highest standard and treat members of the public with dignity and respect, taking account of their individual needs. Representatives will actively promote equality, diversity and social inclusion and encourage all the community to participate in engagement activities.

4.2

Representatives will be honest and impartial when conducting Healthwatch activity, regardless of personal views and will discuss any conflict with the appropriate line manager. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a politically neutral and independent organisation.

5. Use of public funds

Representatives of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public money and proper care of assets which have been publicly funded. Representatives will carry out these obligations responsibly and take appropriate measures to ensure that Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough uses resources efficiently, economically and effectively, avoiding waste and extravagance.

6. Respect in the workplace

Our aim is to create a positive environment within which individuals and organisations with an interest in our work can contribute freely, equally and openly. Use of technology for virtual meetings and events will also be regarded as 'the workplace'. We will not allow any kind of discriminatory behaviour, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

7. Representing Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

7.1

Staff and volunteers including board members are accountable to the public for their actions and the way they carry out their responsibilities. They should always behave in a manner which does not bring Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough into disrepute or damage our relationship with the public, service providers or other stakeholders.

7.2

Representatives must be respectful and offer constructive criticism which does not seek to undermine an individual.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough representatives are expected to understand and respect the principle of collective decision making and abide by all decisions made. When a decision is made, all Board members are bound by that decision and should publicly support it.

7.3

Where representatives of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough attend meetings whether in person or virtual means, they will provide feedback in a timely and structured manner.

7.4

When speaking on behalf of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, representatives will reflect the priorities and policies of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, even if they differ from personal views. If they are there in a personal capacity or a capacity connected with another role they undertake, they should always be explicit if they are expressing their own personal views.

7.5

When participating in meetings or other activities, in person or online, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough representatives agree to:

- a) Attend on time and be prepared
- b) Send apologies if unable to attend
- c) Listen to, respect and value the opinions of others
- d) Speak one at a time through the Chair or meeting facilitator

- e) Be clear and keep to the point, using plain English and avoiding the use of jargon and acronyms
- f) Ask for more information or explanation if necessary
- g) Declare an interest where one exists or may be perceived to exist
- h) Work positively with Healthwatch representatives
- i) Provide feedback to those they represent
- j) Respect the authority of the role of the Chair or meeting facilitator and accept a majority vote, where needed, as decisive.

7.6

Approaches to representatives from the media must be referred to the Chair, CEO or Communications Manager. The Chair and CEO will be the official spokesperson of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and no other staff or volunteer should commit to media interviews without first consulting and gaining the approval of the Chair or CEO.

7.7

All staff and volunteers must be politically impartial in their public role. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will sometimes initiate or participate in campaigning about an issue. Care must be taken to ensure that, in doing so, the principle of political neutrality is always maintained and that nothing is done that could be interpreted as partisan in nature or suggests support for a specific party-political view.

8. Duty of confidentiality

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will sometimes receive information which is not in the public domain, often relating to individuals, organisations or financial matters. Representatives of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will respect confidentiality and not divulge third party information without the agreement of the third party, or a legal requirement to do so, and operate according to our confidentiality policy.

9. Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to understanding, accepting and appreciating individual difference. In practice, this means treating others with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual and their experience. We will not

tolerate discrimination against others based on, but not limited to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with our Equality and Diversity policy.

10. Gifts and hospitality

It is not normally acceptable for representatives of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to accept a gift, reward or favour from others for work done in an official capacity. This does not include gifts of minor value such as pens or calendars. If gifts are offered, your line manager, Volunteer Manager or CEO must be informed, and will determine the action to be taken. Your Gifts and Hospitality Register must be completed.

11. Alcohol, substance misuse and smoking

11.1

Smoking is not permitted on Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough premises, or within the premises where Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough work is being undertaken. Consumption of alcohol is not permitted during working hours.

11.2

Representatives of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough must not be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours or when representing Healthwatch at formal events and meetings.

12. Dress code

All representatives of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough should be neat and tidy in appearance and dress in a way that inspires confidence in a professional service.

13. Reporting misconduct

13.1

If any employee or volunteer has a question or concern, or feels that an employee, volunteer, or the organisation is not meeting the commitment outlined in this document, do not stay silent. Contact your line manager, CEO, Volunteer Manager or Chair. If the concern remains unresolved,

reference should be made to our grievance procedure, the problem-solving process in our volunteering policy or our whistleblowing policy and procedure.

13.2

Members of the public who wish to report a breach in our code of conduct can raise the concern directly with the Chair or CEO. Alternatively, if it is more appropriate, they can raise a complaint in accordance with our complaints policy which is also available on our website, and upon request from any member of our team. When reporting concerns, every effort will be made to keep the source of information confidential although this cannot be guaranteed if further action is necessary.

13.3

We take our Code of Conduct seriously and expect the same of our employees and volunteers.

14. Failure to comply

14.1

Breaches of our code of conduct will be treated consistently and fairly by the Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Chair and Board.

14.2

Failure to comply with the principles and underlying policies in this document may result in disciplinary action for paid employees which can include termination of employment, or commencing the problem-solving process for volunteers, which can include termination of the volunteer agreement and relationship.

15. Data protection

15.1

Any personal information provided in connection with this policy will be processed in accordance with data protection principles and will only be processed to ensure that individuals act in the best interests of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

15.2

See Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's data protection policy for more details about our compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

16. Who this policy concerns

16.1

This Code of Conduct applies to all those acting on behalf of the organisation, including staff, volunteers, trustees, and Non-Executive Directors, all of whom are expected to comply with and uphold its provisions.

16.2

For employees, the management and declaration of conflicts of interest are also addressed within their contract of employment and relevant HR policies.

Approved by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board of Directors

Date: March 2026

For review: March 2027

Responsible Officer

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough