

Healthwatch Cambridge and Peterborough Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

Healthwatch Cambridge and Peterborough 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 Cambridge 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 work to demonstrate the impact volunteering has on improving health and social care services.

We do this in conjunction with the Communications Teams and in particular the Impact and Data Officer, capturing and sharing with our volunteers the impact made by their involvement with Healthwatch.

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 organisation's in Cambridge and Peterborough.

We have been accredited with the Investing in Volunteers award and as such we work in accordance with policies and procedures which are considered best practice within the industry. We will continue to incorporate and work to these standards believing these make us a good place to volunteer.

2. Aims of the Volunteering Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- a) Set out the principles and working practices for volunteer involvement and ensure that best practice is followed.
- b) 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 those promoting voluntary activities. This is supported by our Volunteer Handbook.

- c) 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 add enormous value to the organisation by bringing a variety of skills and a fresh perspective: –

- a) They can offer time and passion to a particular project, adding value to our work and supporting our sustainability.
- b) They have knowledge of their local communities. By involving volunteers, we can build stronger links with local communities.
- c) They act as ambassadors, promoting Healthwatch activities and our services. Volunteering is a unique role, different to that of paid workers, who they do not replace.
- d) 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?

- a) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 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.
- b) We recognise barriers to volunteering for individuals from different sections of the community and will monitor our volunteer involvement practices ensuring that we are inclusive of all sections of the community.
- c) Details of how we will support our volunteers appears in the Volunteers Handbook.
- d) We recognise that not all individuals will have the skills and 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 organisation for additional support.

6. Planning for Volunteer involvement

- a) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 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. With this in mind we will seek to develop a range of volunteering opportunities, both short and

long term.

- b) A role description will be developed for each volunteering opportunity.
- c) We 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. Recruitment and selection

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will:

- a) Use an open and fair recruitment process for each volunteering role, which will be outlined to potential volunteers in advance.
- b) Promote volunteering opportunities through a variety of advertising methods to ensure that the opportunity is promoted to a wide range of potential volunteers.
- c) 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 and Data Protection Policy.
- d) Make reasonable adjustments where possible, to meet the access needs of potential volunteers.
- e) Volunteers will be selected and screened for suitability through one or more of the following methods, dependent on the role:
 - I. Completed application form for all volunteer roles.
 - II. Informal or formal interview.
 - III. 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.
 - IV. Where references are difficult for new volunteers to obtain, we offer an internal recommendation process as an alternative.
 - V. In line with our Safeguarding Adults Policy, if the role involves regulated activities in relation to Vulnerable Adults, Healthwatch will ensure that the volunteer has a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

8. Volunteers with minor or spent convictions

- a) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough recognises that many individuals who have criminal records with spent or minor convictions are reluctant to apply for voluntary work where this would involve disclosure of their record.

- b) In acknowledgement of this Healthwatch, welcomes applications from individuals who may have minor or spent convictions and will also promote this as part of the volunteer application process.
- c) These cases will be considered by the CEO and Head of Operations 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.
- d) If an applicant is not suited to the volunteering role, the reasons will be explained to the applicant.

9. Induction, training, and ongoing support

- a) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will provide an induction, mandatory training as well as appropriate ongoing support for volunteers, relative to their role. This will prepare volunteers for the tasks allocated to them.
- b) The training will include Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, safeguarding, GDPR, Representation training and presentation training etc.
- c) Volunteers will be offered the opportunity to complete accredited safeguarding adults training and invited to update this training every three years.
- d) A volunteer handbook will be provided as part of the induction, which will include information relative to the volunteering role, e.g. volunteer role description, staff contact details, expense claim information, details of volunteer processes and links to essential policies, on our websites, as well as a training matrix / log and other useful information.
- e) All volunteers will have a named individual as their main point of contact and will be provided with appropriate support. This will provide them with an opportunity to feedback on the progress within their role, discuss any personal development needs or talk about any issues or problems. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity of a review meeting, the frequency of these will vary depending on the nature of their role and time commitment.
- f) Healthwatch will seek to involve volunteers as partners in project development.
- g) 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.
- h) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will ensure that volunteers receive appropriate recognition for their contribution for volunteering

activities undertaken, in the form of thanks, volunteer certificates, or low value gifts.

10. Personal Safety

- a) All volunteers are expected to follow safe practice guidelines, as described in the Volunteer Handbook and Lone Working Policy.
- b) 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. Nor will volunteers attend a meeting/visit the house of a member of the public in carrying out their duties as a Healthwatch volunteer.
- c) It is the responsibility of the volunteers, when accepting an activity to be able to make their own way to and from the event. However, members of staff are permitted to offer lifts to volunteers to events or meetings, if it is convenient and is at their discretion. Volunteers may, but are not obliged to, provide lifts to other volunteers. However, this is at the discretion of the volunteer offering the lift.

11. Volunteer Expenses

- a) As part of its commitment to ensuring equity of access to volunteering opportunities, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is committed to paying pre-agreed out of pocket expenses to volunteers that are incurred solely in undertaking the volunteering role.
- b) Volunteer expense claims will only be paid for actual expenses incurred as evidenced by receipts, using a standard claim form, and following the procedure outlined in the Volunteer Handbook.
- c) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 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.
- d) **Travel expenses for volunteers** will be paid at a rate approved by the Board and not in excess of the national guidelines. Visit [Volunteer opportunities, rights and expenses: Pay and expenses - GOV.UK](#) to ensure that volunteers do not receive taxable profit from their volunteering activities. These rates will be reviewed periodically in line with staff expenses. Full details of the rates appear in the Volunteers Handbook.

12. Dealing with problems

- a) Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 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.
- b) Healthwatch therefore has a clear and fair problem-solving process for dealing with concerns around the volunteering relationship.
- c) We will also make reasonable adjustments within the organisations resources to ensure that volunteers can engage fully in the problem-solving process. Volunteers may therefore bring a support person or advocate to any meeting that forms part of the problem-solving process.
- d) For other concerns or complaints please refer to the Complaints Policy.

13. Dealing with Volunteers' concerns

- a) **Informal:** Volunteers are encouraged to work with Healthwatch to resolve any concerns through ongoing support with their Manager or the Volunteer Manager as detailed in section 8e above.
- b) We will encourage volunteers to resolve any issues through this informal process in the first instance.
- c) 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.

Formal: The CEO or their nominated representative will:

- d) Acknowledge the concern in the volunteer's preferred method of communication within 3 working days.
- e) Offer a meeting to listen to the 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.
- f) If the volunteer wishes, the concerns can be discussed via telephone, letter, or email instead of a meeting. It is noted that 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:

- g) Acknowledge the appeal within 5 working days in the volunteer's preferred method of communication.
- h) Offer an appeal meeting to listen to the volunteer's concerns
- i) Review the outcome of the decision to ensure that the organisation's

policies and procedures have been followed correctly.

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

14. Dealing with Healthwatch Cambridge and Peterborough's concerns

Informal: Healthwatch Cambridge and Peterborough will:

- a) Work with volunteers to resolve any concerns informally through ongoing support from the Volunteer Manager as detailed in Section 8 above.
- b) Tell volunteers about any problems regarding their volunteering at the earliest opportunity.
- c) 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.
- d) If the above process does not resolve the problem, Healthwatch will offer the volunteer a formal meeting to discuss this.

Formal: The CEO or their nominated representative will:

- e) Offer the volunteer a meeting to talk through the organisation's concerns and explain what the issues are, outlining their impact.
- f) The CEO will explore with the volunteer if there are any other opportunities to resolve the concerns and notify them of their decision within 15 working days.
- g) If Healthwatch 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:

- h) 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 to ensure that the organisation's policies and procedures have been followed correctly.

- i) Notify the volunteer of their decision within 15 working days of this meeting. Exceptionally further time may be needed; this will be agreed with the volunteer in advance where possible.
- j) The Board's decision is final.

15. In exceptional cases: There are some occasions where Healthwatch 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:

- a) Threats, abuse or attacks on any staff, volunteers, or members of the public
- b) Breaching our policies on safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults
- c) Criminal acts against Healthwatch such as theft
- d) Any serious breach of our Policies or the Volunteer Agreement.

On these occasions the volunteer will be asked to end their volunteering with Healthwatch with immediate effect.

16. When a volunteer's involvement with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ends.

A volunteer's role with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough may end for a variety of reasons. Whatever the circumstances, we will formally acknowledge the end of the volunteering relationship. Details of this process appear in the Volunteer Handbook.

17. Appreciating the value of our volunteers

Volunteers add immeasurable value to the work Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough do. In contributing to our work: -

- a) They enable us to reach more people across the county.
- b) They add their own set of skills, expertise and lived-experience.
- c) They provide a diversity to our outreach work.

In welcoming volunteers, we gain their knowledge.

- e) We listen to their views encouraging them to participate fully within the organisation and how we work.
- f) We celebrate their participation by organising special events and group meetings to show our appreciation.

Reviewed March 2025

Approved by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Responsible Officer

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Author – Heather Lord, Volunteer Manager – March 2025

How to apply:

Please complete an application form, available from our websites at

www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk or

www.healthwatchpeterborough.co.uk or from the office at:

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Peterborough, The Maple Centre, 6 Oak

Drive,

Huntingdon,

PE29 7HN

0330 355

1285

enquiries@healthwatchcambspboro.co.uk

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