

## Healthwatch Kingston Code of Conduct

### 1. Scope

This policy applies to

Employees	X
Contractors	X
Volunteers	X
Partners	
Suppliers	X
Consultants	X

Unless otherwise stated, this policy and procedure is non-contractual, does not form part of any contract of employment, and may be adapted or amended at any time by the Board of Trustees.

### 2. Policy Statement

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

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

### 3. Our values

All participants working with or for Healthwatch Kingston are required to uphold the following [Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life](#):

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity:** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

- **Openness:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

#### **4. Compliance with law**

All those who represent Healthwatch Kingston are required to abide by relevant laws and regulations, including those relating to the environment, health and safety, discrimination, disability and employment. 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 Kingston Chair or Chief Executive Officer immediately of any possible or actual infringement.

#### **5. Conflict of interest**

Representatives will complete a declaration of interest form when they join Healthwatch Kingston, and ensure it is kept up to date. Representatives are expected to maintain professional boundaries in their relationships with each other, and external parties such as commissioners and providers. Full details can be found in our **Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures**.

#### **6. Serving the public**

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

#### **7. Use of public funds**

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

## 8. 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 or victimisation. Full details can be found in our **Prevention of Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedures**.

## 9. Representing Healthwatch Kingston

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 Kingston into disrepute or damage our relationship with the public, service providers or other stakeholders. Representatives must be respectful and offer constructive criticism which does not seek to undermine an individual.

Healthwatch Kingston board members are expected to understand and respect the principle of collective decision making and abide by Healthwatch Kingston's **Decision-Making Policy and Procedures**. When a decision is made, all Board members are bound by that decision and should publicly support it.

Where representatives of Healthwatch Kingston attend meetings whether in person or virtual means, they will provide feedback in a timely manner. When speaking on behalf of Healthwatch Kingston, representatives will reflect the priorities and policies of Healthwatch Kingston, 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. When participating in meetings or other activities, in person or virtual, Healthwatch Kingston representatives are expected to:

- Attend on time and be prepared
- Send apologies if unable to attend
- Listen to, respect and value the opinions of others
- Speak one at a time through the Chair or meeting facilitator
- Be clear and keep to the point, using plain English and avoid the use of jargon and acronyms
- Ask for more information or explanation if necessary
- Declare an interest where one exists or may be perceived to exist
- Work positively with and avoid disagreeing or publicly challenging other Healthwatch Kingston representatives
- Provide feedback to those they represent
- Respect the authority of the role of the Chair, meeting facilitator or most senior Healthwatch Kingston representative and accept a majority vote, where needed, as decisive.

Approaches to representatives by third parties for information or views, including contact with the media must be referred to the Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the Board. In respect of media communications, the Chair or Chief Executive Officer will be the official spokesperson of Healthwatch Kingston, and no other staff or volunteer should commit to media interviews without first consulting and gaining the approval of the Chair or Chief Executive Officer. It will be usual practice that the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Board will confer before committing to media relating to Healthwatch Kingston.

All staff and volunteers must be politically impartial in their public role. Healthwatch Kingston 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.

## **10. Duty of confidentiality**

Healthwatch Kingston will sometimes receive information which is not in the public domain, often relating to individuals, organisations or financial matters. Representatives of Healthwatch Kingston will respect confidentiality and not divulge third party information without the consent/agreement of the third party, or a legal requirement to do so, and operate according to our **Information Security and Governance Policy and Procedures**.

## **11. 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, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedures**.

## **12. Gifts and hospitality**

It is not normally acceptable for representatives of Healthwatch Kingston 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, the Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the Board of Trustees must be informed and will determine the action to be taken. The Gifts and Hospitality Register must also be completed.

## **13. Alcohol, substance misuse and smoking**

Smoking is not permitted on Healthwatch Kingston premises, or within the premises where Healthwatch Kingston work is being undertaken.

Consumption of alcohol is not permitted during working hours. Representatives of Healthwatch Kingston must not be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours or while representing Healthwatch Kingston publicly.

Incapacity for work through the misuse of drink, drugs or other substances is a disciplinary matter for staff and will be addressed through the problem-solving process for volunteers. Where representatives are prescribed medication that may affect their mood or ability to carry out their role, they should bring this to the attention of their line manager or volunteer supporter.

#### **14. Dress code**

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

#### **15. Reporting misconduct**

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, they should act by contacting the Chief Executive Officer or the Chair of the Board of Trustees. If the concern remains unresolved, reference should be made to the **Grievance Procedures** for employees, the 'Dealing with difficulties' section of Healthwatch England's 'Guide to Volunteering' or our **Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures**.

Members of the public who wish to report a breach in our code of conduct can raise the concern directly with the Chair or Chief Executive Officer. Alternatively, if it is more appropriate, they can raise a complaint in accordance with our **Complaints Policy and Procedures** which is also available on our website, and upon request from any member of our team.

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

#### **16. Failure to comply**

Breaches of our code of conduct will be treated consistently and fairly by the Healthwatch Kingston Chief Executive Officer or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

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

Volunteers can appeal against a sanction by writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees as set out in the Complaints Policy & Procedure.