

Healthwatch Kingston Volunteering Policy and Procedures

1. Scope

This policy applies to

Employees	x
Contractors	x
Volunteers	x
Partners	
Suppliers	
Consultants	

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

Volunteers are vital to the work of Healthwatch Kingston. We value their passion, energy, and ideas. We strive to involve a diverse group of volunteers who reflect the communities with whom we work.

We are committed to recruiting volunteers regardless of their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or offending background, in order to ensure HW Kingston reflects the diversity of the community.

This policy aims to ensure a safe and consistent approach to our involvement of volunteers.

3. Definitions

Volunteers support Healthwatch Kingston by giving their time freely to carry out roles that have been initiated by, or agreed with, the organisation. No payment, other than the reimbursement of agreed expenses, is made to people who give their time as volunteers to Healthwatch Kingston.

In most cases, volunteers will need to be over 16 years of age to volunteer independently with Healthwatch Kingston. Under 18s will be asked for parental consent. Younger people may volunteer with us if they are accompanied by a responsible adult. NB: Youth Out Loud! members (volunteers aged 13-17 years) are always accompanied by two Healthwatch staff members.

We have a range of different volunteer roles at Healthwatch Kingston, these include our:

- Trustees
- Active Affiliates – who support a range of Healthwatch [Kingston](#) activities

- Authorised Representatives – who support our Enter and View visits
- Task Group Members – who attend, or contribute to, our Task Group Meetings
- Office Volunteers – who provide regular support in our office
- Event Volunteers – who provide ad hoc support when we attend events
- Project Volunteers – who provide support with Healthwatch Kingston projects
- Young Volunteers (members of Youth Out Loud!) – age 13-17 years.

4. Procedures

4.1 Recruitment

Volunteers can choose how much time they wish to volunteer, their areas of interest and how they would like to be involved.

As part of the recruitment process, volunteers will be asked to undertake a **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** check and provide two references.

Volunteers will be asked to complete an application form. Once this form has been processed, volunteers will be invited for an informal meeting with a staff member and / or trustee (two adults if the young volunteer is aged 13 to 17 years). This meeting is to ensure that the applicant is suitable for the role in question and that the organisation can meet the requirements of the volunteer. Confirmation of appointment will be made in writing shortly thereafter or reasons provided for not doing so.

4.2 Expenses

Healthwatch Kingston will reimburse volunteers for reasonable expenses incurred while they carry out their role. The process will be described in detail as part of the induction, as well as the current allowances.

Expenses will only be reimbursed if they are:

- Supported by valid receipts
- Submitted using a Healthwatch **Kingston** Volunteer Expenses claim form (or a Project specific Volunteer Expenses claim form)
- Submitted before the end of March each financial year.

4.3 Training and Development

Developing the skills and contributing to the personal development of volunteers is important to Healthwatch Kingston. Volunteers will be notified of further training opportunities specific to their role but also to increase their knowledge and experience. This could include attending training sessions provided by the NHS, Local Authority and the voluntary and community sector.

4.4 Insurance

Whilst conducting their role, volunteers will be protected by Healthwatch Kingston's organisational liability insurance. However, Healthwatch Kingston's insurance does not cover personal belongings.

4.5 Data protection and confidentiality

Healthwatch Kingston will protect volunteer information as part of our data protection responsibilities. All information provided by volunteers will be treated as confidential and used only for the purposes stated at collection and will be used and stored in accordance with [Healthwatch Kingston's Privacy Statement](#) and **Information Security and Governance Policy and Procedures**.

4.6 Health and safety

Healthwatch Kingston is committed to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of our volunteers whilst they are volunteering and we expect our volunteers to contribute to maintaining a safe working environment, in accordance with Healthwatch Kingston's **Health and Safety Policy and Procedures**.

4.7 Copyright **and intellectual property**

The rights to any original works that volunteers may produce in the course of volunteering will belong to the charity, unless otherwise agreed.

4.8 Media Relations

No comments or stories should be given directly to the media, unless the volunteer role specifically includes talking to the press or other local media.

4.9 Safeguarding

Healthwatch Kingston is committed to safeguarding and promoting the dignity, wellbeing and safety of children, young people, and adults at risk, across all its activities. All Healthwatch Kingston staff, volunteers and trustees are expected to protect the safety, independence, and wellbeing of vulnerable people. Our safeguarding procedures can be found in Healthwatch Kingston's **Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**.

4.10 Roles and responsibilities

In accordance with Healthwatch Kingston's governance structure, our volunteers are accountable to the Board of Trustees. As such, Healthwatch Kingston expects all volunteers to understand their role and responsibilities, which include the following commitments:

- To complete our volunteer induction
- To be aware of and follow Healthwatch Kingston's organisational policies
- To complete relevant in-house training, where required

- To ensure the views of the community are put before any personal interests regarding health and social care provision

4.11 Code of Conduct

Healthwatch Kingston has a duty to protect its good name and reputation. We have a **Code of Conduct** which sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all those involved in the work of Healthwatch Kingston.

We expect all volunteers to uphold the 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.

4.12 Sickness and Absence

In order to plan for meetings, events and activities, it is helpful for Healthwatch Kingston to have as much notice as possible from volunteers if they cannot attend. If this is due to sickness, it will be helpful to ring the office as early as possible so alternative arrangements can be made. If this is due to absence, such as a holiday, it will be helpful to notify the office in advance.

4.13 Resolving concerns

It is the intention of Healthwatch Kingston that all volunteers are treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. We strive to ensure that all volunteers find their roles interesting, rewarding and a positive experience that can lead to a greater awareness of the issues affecting health and social care services and the people who are using them. There may be times, however, when this is not the case and Healthwatch Kingston will do all it can to resolve any problems as early as possible, using the 'Dealing with difficulties section of Healthwatch England's ['Guide to Volunteering'](#), and, if a formal complaint is made, accordance with Healthwatch Kingston's [Complaints Policy and Procedures](#).

4.14 Ending a volunteer position

All our volunteer roles may be terminated by the volunteer or Healthwatch Kingston without notice. However, where possible, Healthwatch Kingston will give a minimum of two weeks' notice and we expect volunteers to do the same to ensure any work can be finished or handed over.

Healthwatch Kingston will ask any leavers for feedback to help improve its services as well as its internal procedures and processes, but this is on a voluntary basis.

The Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Kingston reserves the right to terminate the role with immediate effect if a volunteer is:

- verbally or physically aggressive towards Healthwatch Kingston staff, volunteers or trustees
- verbally or physically aggressive towards members of the public or professionals from other organisations or bodies
- using illegal substances or alcohol during an event, meeting or activity
- acting against Healthwatch Kingston's policies and procedures
- representing their own interests and not those of Healthwatch Kingston
- committing any offences which put anyone working with or for Healthwatch Kingston at risk.

A volunteer can appeal a decision to terminate on the above grounds by writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees as set out in the Healthwatch Kingston [Complaints Policy and Procedures](#).

6. Supporting Documents

Examples of good practice can be found at:

<https://expertsinvolunteering.org.uk/resources/good-practice>