

Code of Conduct

1. Background

Healthwatch Kingston (hereafter HWK) has a duty to protect its good name and reputation. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out the **standards of behaviour** expected of all those involved in the work of HWK. Adherence to this Code of Conduct is a mandatory requirement.

2. Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to anyone involved in HWK's activities including the Board of Trustees (hereafter trustees), volunteers (affiliates and active affiliates), staff and individuals providing services or support on HWK's behalf. For the purposes of this document, this group will be referred to as participants. This Code of Conduct will apply to all methods of communication including verbal, electronic, written and body language.

3. Why have a Code of Conduct?

HWK aims to create a positive environment within which participants can contribute freely, equally and openly. To achieve this HWK needs to ensure that:

- All contributions from participants are accorded **equal value**
- Contributions from others with an interest or stake in the work of HWK are treated with **respect and courtesy**
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct are tackled consistently and fairly
- The **Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life** are applied to all aspects of HWK's activity

4. What are the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life?

All participants working with or for HWK are required to uphold the following principles and behaviours:

- **Respect** - respect the reputation of HWK and treat fellow participants, and any other people that the HWK role brings the participant into contact with, with respect and courtesy
- **Openness and accountability** - be fair and open in all dealings and be accountable for decisions and actions
- **Honesty** - act honestly and withdraw from involvement in any business of HWK where there is a conflict of interest or where there is a financial benefit or preference.
- **Best interests and objectivity** - act only in the best interests of HWK, promoting public confidence and taking decisions on merit and in the public interest.
- **Integrity** - not place oneself under any obligation, financial or otherwise to a person or organisation that may influence one's decisions or actions.
- **Leadership** - take responsibility for promoting and exemplifying these principles and leading by example in order to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of HWK in conducting public business.

5. How will the Code of Conduct promote equality and diversity?

HWK places great emphasis on understanding, acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. HWK participants will treat everyone they are in contact with in the course of their HWK activities with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual and their experience. HWK expects participants to demonstrate attitudes and behaviours which support this position and will not tolerate discrimination by HWK participants arising from (but not limited to) regardless of their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or offending background. Furthermore HWK will seek out and listen to the views of patients, service users, carers and the public, especially those individuals and groups whose voices are not usually heard.

6. How will applying the Code of Conduct protect confidentiality?

HWK participants will respect all confidences they are party to and will never disclose confidential and sensitive information unless there is a legal duty to do so for example in the interests of patient/service user and then only after approval from HWK's Manager or the Chair of the Board Trustees.

7. What actions will underpin the Code of Conduct?

HWK participants will comply at all times with relevant legislation to safeguard the interests of individuals against any form of inequality, prejudice, discrimination and stigma, including statutory regulations that protect the unauthorised dissemination of data, personal information and other unwarranted disclosure. To protect participants and the rights of individuals HWK has in place a set of policies and procedures that all participants must adhere to and which form part of their agreement with HWK.

8. How will the Code of Conduct direct behaviour?

In accordance with this Code of Conduct all participants representing HWK are required to:

- Accurately represent any differing views of participants and the wider community when speaking on HWK's behalf
- Not work against the majority view once a decision has been democratically taken, though a different viewpoint may be recorded in the notes/minutes of meetings
- Only carry out activities authorised by HWK
- Not pursue a single issue or personal agenda at the expense of other HWK priorities
- Ensure that when representing HWK at a meeting or event or in any other way, they are speaking on behalf of the HWK and not themselves
- Report back when attending anything on HWK behalf, preferably in a written report to ensure there is a record

9. What will happen if the Code of Conduct is not followed?

Breaches of this Code of Conduct by participants will be handled by the Manager of HWK. The following sanctions are available to the Manager:

- Informal warning
- Formal warning
- Suspension from some or all HWK's activities
- Termination of HWK role

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

Breaches of this Code of Conduct by staff and those providing support and services to HWK via a formal arrangement will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

10. Document Control

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