

Policy Title	Diversity and Equality
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Next revision due	August 2025
This policy outlines the duty and responsibility of staff and volunteers working on behalf of Healthwatch Greenwich in relation to Diversity and Equality.	
This policy can be supplied in different formats: Tel: 020 8301 8340 or email: info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk	

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1. Introduction

1.1. This policy reinforces our commitment to providing equality and fairness to all in our employment and not provide less favourable facilities or treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, or sex and sexual orientation. Healthwatch actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the organisation and enhance the way we work. This policy is non-contractual.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The policy applies to employees directly employed by Healthwatch Greenwich, to workers employed via agencies, contractors in terms of employment, non-executive directors, volunteers, service users and the general public in terms of service provision.
- 2.2. The policy applies specifically to discrimination and equality of opportunity in respect of 'protected characteristics' as defined in the Equalities Act 2010.
- Age
 - Disability
 - Race
 - Sex
 - Religion or cultural beliefs
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marital status and civil partnership
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity

2.3. The policy applies across the range of employment policies and practice, including those relating to Discipline, Grievance, Code of Conduct, Complaints, Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Healthwatch Greenwich values its staff and volunteers and believes them to be entitled to a working environment in which they are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Accordingly, all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to treat each other with dignity and respect. Healthwatch Greenwich will not tolerate any acts of unlawful or unfair discrimination (including harassment) committed against an employee, volunteer, client or visitor because of a protected characteristic. The Volunteer Manager is responsible for providing advice and guidance on equality and diversity issues to volunteers.

4. Aims

4.1. Healthwatch Greenwich is committed to valuing diversity and working with equality as a core value, Healthwatch Greenwich aims to:

- Promote equality of opportunity.
- Celebrate and value diversity.
- Eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination.
- Create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for every employee.
- Create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all team members are recognised and valued.
- Not tolerate any form of intimidation, bullying, or harassment, and to discipline those that breach this policy.

- Foster good relations between those people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
 - Encourage anyone who feels they have been subject to discrimination to raise their concerns so we can apply corrective measures.
- 4.2. Healthwatch Greenwich will provide equality of opportunity and equal treatment as an integral part of good practice. The organisation is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised. We will support our staff, volunteers and clients in not tolerating any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other organisations or clients.
- 4.3. Not only are there moral and social reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, it is in the best interest of this organisation to recruit and develop the best people for our jobs from as wide and diverse a pool of talent as possible. All employees and volunteers will be given help and encouragement to develop their full potential and utilise their unique talents, thereby fully utilising the skills and resources of our organisation.

5. General purpose

- 5.1. Healthwatch Greenwich's practices will ensure that staff, volunteers, service users and the general public will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, race, sex, religion or cultural beliefs, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity.
- 5.2. Healthwatch Greenwich's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice relates to all kinds of discrimination, as set out below:
- Direct discrimination - where someone is treated less favourably than another because they have a protected characteristic.

- Indirect discrimination – when a requirement or a condition is applied which has a detrimental effect on a particular group or individual. This applies even if there was not a deliberate intention to discriminate.
- Associative discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who has a protected characteristic.
- Perceptive discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic even if they do not possess that characteristic.
- Harassment – unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- This applies even if the conduct is not directed at the individual or if they do not have the protected characteristic.
- Third party harassment – potential liability for the harassment of staff by others such as contractors or service users.
- Victimisation – when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint under the Equalities Act or it is thought that they have done so.

6. Employment Practices for staff and volunteers

- Healthwatch Greenwich aims to promote equality and diversity as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant, employee or volunteer receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable in the context of the policy. Selection, recruitment, training, promotion and employment

practices will be subject to regular review to ensure that they comply with the Diversity and Equalities Policy.

- All training opportunities will be published widely to all appropriate employees and not in such a way so as to exclude particular groups.
- Healthwatch Greenwich regards discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of staff, volunteers, clients or others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct.

7. Unconscious bias

- 7.1. Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making rapid judgements and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. (Equality Challenge Unit: 2013 Unconscious bias in higher education)
- 7.2. The experiences, values, and attitudes we have come across in our lives shapes our view of the world. They can influence the decisions we make, the relationships we have, and the opinions we ourselves hold.
- 7.3. Sometimes we are aware when our judgement is clouded. For example, a new father might say, "I have the cutest baby in the world - but I'm biased." However, in many cases, our biases can be "unconscious", and much more difficult to acknowledge. We can overlook influence of this bias if we don't realise that we hold certain views and consider why we hold them.
- 7.4. Bias can creep into any situation where individuals have the power to influence the outcome through their decisions and actions. Bias can be

costly. It can cause us to make decisions that are not objective, miss opportunities and limit potential.

7.5. Who might I be biased towards? It is possible to be unconsciously biased against people for many reasons, including any and all of the protected characteristics outlined in section 2.

7.6. How can unconscious bias be expressed?

- Bias against people with any of the above characteristics.
- Popular stereotypes regarding any of the above characteristics.
- Opinions based on generalities or one-off experiences.
- Bias caused by long-held values, for example based on our parents' opinions.
- Bias based on our earliest encounters with the world.

7.7. How can I identify my biases? Healthwatch Greenwich encourages staff and volunteers to ask themselves questions about their thought process, for example:

- Is my opinion influenced by any of the above characteristics?
- What would someone who disagrees with me say?
- What is preventing me from changing my mind?
- What are some ways I can manage my biases?
- Evaluate and challenge the first opinion that comes to your mind.
- Consider whether your decision is based on values or facts.
- Talk to others with differing viewpoints.
- Try to remain as objective as you can.

8. Delivering our services

8.1. In developing its services, support and publicity materials, Healthwatch Greenwich will seek to ensure that access is equitable for all. This will

include, wherever practicable and affordable, making specific access arrangements for clients with disabilities or learning difficulties, or any other protected characteristic which may apply, such as religion and belief. Healthwatch Greenwich will attempt to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual.

9. Breaches of the policy

- 9.1. If you believe that you may have been disadvantaged, you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Policy.
- 9.2. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Workers or Volunteers who make allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations of a breach of this policy, which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, usually be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. In the event of communication difficulties arising because the employee's or volunteers first language is not English other means of communication will be offered.
- 9.3. If, after investigation, you are proven to have harassed any other worker, service user or volunteer on the grounds of sex, pregnancy or maternity leave, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, race, disability or age or otherwise act in breach of this policy, you may be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. HWG will always take breaches of this policy seriously and take appropriate action.

9.4. As this policy applies equally to the organisation's representative's relations with service users, staff and volunteers if, after investigation, you are found to have discriminated against or harassed a service user, staff or volunteer you may also be subject to disciplinary action or review of your volunteer agreement.

Appendix 1 – Contact Information

HWG CEO:

Name: Joy Beishon

Title: Chief Executive – Healthwatch Greenwich

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Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment Form

EIA screening determines whether the policy has any relevance for equality, i.e. is there any impact on one or more of the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

1 Name of policy/procedure being assessed:	Diversity and Equality Policy
2. Is this a new or existing policy/procedure?	Existing
3. What is the function of the policy/procedure?	To provide a framework for equal working practices for HWG staff and volunteers and to ensure that diversity is valued and supported.
4. What is it trying to achieve and why?	To ensure that all staff, volunteers and service users of HWG are valued and their diversity is respected and supported. To ensure that the work of HWG reflects the wider population of Greenwich.
5. Who is intended to benefit and how?	Staff, volunteers and service users to ensure the work of HWG is inclusive, accessible and fit for purpose.
6. Is there any potential for differential impact (negative or positive) on any of the protected characteristics?	No. The policy is explicitly designed to prevent negative differentials.
7. Is there any possibility of discriminating unlawfully, directly or indirectly, against	No

people from any protected characteristic?	
8. Could there be an effect on relations between certain groups?	No
9. Does the policy explicitly involve or focus on a particular equalities group i.e. because they have particular needs?	No
Designated responsible officer of the policy under review Name: Joy Beishon Position: Chief Executive Date: August 2023	