

Volunteer Policy



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Key Contact	Kiki Bourcha
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This policy outlines the duty and responsibility of staff and volunteers working on behalf of Healthwatch Greenwich .	
Please contact us if you would like to receive this policy in a different format: Tel: 020 8301 8340 or email: info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk	

1. Introduction

Healthwatch Greenwich 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 publicly funded health services.

At Healthwatch Greenwich we welcome volunteers to help us undertake our work and we will involve a diverse range of volunteers who reflect our local community.

2. Aims of the Volunteering Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the principles and working practices for volunteer involvement and ensure that best practice is followed.

- 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 promoting voluntary activities
- Ensure that volunteer involvement in Healthwatch Greenwich is understood and accepted and there is clarity about why we involve volunteers

3. What is volunteering?

A volunteer is defined as someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward, except for out of pocket expenses. For Healthwatch Greenwich a volunteer is a person who makes a commitment to support the work of staff in order to support public engagement in the design and delivery of health and social care.

4. Why Healthwatch Greenwich involves volunteers

Volunteers bring a variety of skills and a fresh perspective:

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

Everyone has the right to volunteer without experiencing discrimination, and Healthwatch Greenwich has a responsibility to treat volunteers fairly. We recognise barriers to volunteering for individuals from different sections of the community and will monitor our volunteer involvement practices to ensure that we are inclusive of all sections of the community.

- **Young People**– Healthwatch Greenwich will seek to involve young people as volunteers, ensuring that we have appropriate safeguarding measures in place as set out in our Children’s Safeguarding Policy and seek parental permission for all volunteers under 16 years
- **People with disabilities** – Healthwatch Greenwich will work positively with volunteers that may have disabilities and will ask all potential volunteers if they require any adjustments to support them in their volunteering role as part of the application process. Healthwatch Greenwich will make reasonable adjustments to volunteering roles and support within available resources.

People in receipt of benefits – Healthwatch Greenwich will promote volunteering to individuals on means tested benefits and will direct to useful information such as Volunteer opportunities, rights and expenses: Pay and expenses – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Healthwatch Greenwich is aware that there may be requirements for volunteers to be available for work; to be free to go to an interview with 48 hours’ notice, and to be able to start work within a week of being given notice.

- **Volunteers with minor or spent convictions** – Healthwatch Greenwich recognises that individuals with criminal records with spent or minor convictions maybe reluctant to apply for voluntary work where this would involve disclosure of their record. Healthwatch Greenwich welcomes applications from individuals who have minor or spent convictions. These cases will be considered by the volunteer manager 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 National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO).

- **Volunteers from overseas** – Healthwatch Greenwich welcomes volunteers from overseas who have the legal right to undertake voluntary work as part of their immigration status in the UK. Healthwatch Greenwich can direct potential overseas volunteers to the NVCO Volunteering Information Sheet¹ for guidance on whether they are eligible to volunteer but this is not a substitute for immigration or legal advice. Healthwatch Greenwich recommends that individuals check their right to volunteer with the UK Border Agency, in order not to jeopardise their immigration status.

Healthwatch Greenwich recognises that not all individuals will have the skills and experience or be eligible for every volunteering role. Where this occurs and we have no other suitable opportunities available, we will signpost individuals to their local volunteer support organisation.

6. What can people get from volunteering with us?

Healthwatch Greenwich recognises that volunteering is a two-way process; with volunteers giving their time to help and in return gaining some benefits for themselves including:

- Providing an opportunity to meet new people and be involved with something personally rewarding
- Helping people learn new skills and providing a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities.
- Healthwatch Greenwich will support volunteers by providing references to those who have completed 60 hours of volunteering not including required training.

¹ [Volunteers from overseas | NCVO](#)

- volunteers will be recognised for their contributions in a variety of ways, such as certificates, awards, or celebration events.

7. Planning for volunteer involvement

Healthwatch Greenwich 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. We will seek to develop a range of volunteering opportunities, both short and long-term.

Healthwatch Greenwich will ensure that volunteers are risk assessed to plan what training and support is required.

8. Recruitment and selection

Healthwatch Greenwich will:

- Use an open and fair recruitment process for each volunteering role, which will be outlined to potential volunteers in advance
- Promote volunteering opportunities through a variety of advertising methods to ensure that the opportunity is promoted to a wide range of potential volunteers
- 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 confidentiality in line with the Confidentiality Policy
- Make reasonable adjustments where possible, to meet the needs of potential volunteers

Volunteers will be selected and screened for suitability through one or more of the following methods, dependent on the role:

- Completed application form
- Informal or formal interview

- 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
- In line with our Safeguarding Adults and Children's Safeguarding Policy, if the role involves regulated activities in relation to Vulnerable Adults or children, Healthwatch Greenwich will ensure that the volunteer has an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Check.

If an applicant is not suited to the volunteering role, the reasons will be explained to the applicant.

9. Induction, training and ongoing support

Healthwatch Greenwich will provide an induction and appropriate training for volunteers, relative to their role, so that they are prepared for the tasks allocated to them. This training will include at a minimum safeguarding, equality and diversity, health and safety, GDPR and lone working.

All volunteers will have a named individual as their main point of contact and will be provided with appropriate support. This will provide the opportunity to feedback on the progress of their role, discuss any personal development needs or talk about any problems.

Healthwatch Greenwich will seek to involve volunteers as partners in project development. At an early stage in their induction new volunteers will be introduced to members of staff who they are likely to work alongside.

10. Personal safety

All volunteers are expected to follow safe practice guidelines, as described in the volunteer handbook and lone working policy. 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. Members of staff will not provide transportation for volunteers to events or meetings. Staff will not arrange car sharing for volunteers. Volunteers are not obliged to provide transportation for other volunteers.

11. Volunteer Expenses

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All necessary out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the volunteer expenses policy. If required, they will be reimbursed including expenses for travel, and meals (if appropriate). To claim expenses, a Volunteer Expenses form must be completed and relevant receipts attached. A member of HWG staff must countersign this form to authorise payment of these expenses.

Healthwatch Greenwich will ask volunteers to choose the most cost-effective method of traveling to and from volunteering activities, taking advantage of concessionary travel rates where applicable. It is expected that this is public transport. Reimbursement for private cars or taxis will not be made unless agreed in advance.

12. Managing Expectations

Our volunteers can expect to:

- Be given clear information about the roles of volunteers and paid staff within Healthwatch Greenwich
- Feel valued, supported and be treated with respect
- Be made aware of our responsibility for Health & Safety, and have access to a copy of any Risk Assessments carried out for their role

Healthwatch Greenwich expects its volunteers to:

- Do their best when carrying out their roles

- Sign necessary documentation upon receipt of the items, such as phones and laptops, and consent to responsibly maintain their security and well-being.
- Follow our policies, procedure and good practice guidelines
- Not act in a way which would damage Healthwatch reputation
- To treat with respect our staff and other volunteers, visitors, the public, agencies and organisations we work with
- Let the appointed person know if they are going to be late or unable to attend their agreed day/time
- Give feedback about their role, development, training needs, concerns or worries
- Complete mandatory training
- Volunteers must complete 60 hours of volunteering not including required training.

13. Dealing with problems

Healthwatch Greenwich aims to make volunteering a positive experience for volunteers, but recognises that sometimes, for all sorts of reasons, problems can occur. Wherever possible, problems will be resolved through informal means and volunteers are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have with the Volunteer Manager. If the issue cannot be resolved, it should be escalated to HWG CEO.

14. When volunteer involvement ends

A volunteer's role with Healthwatch Greenwich may end for a variety of reasons. Whatever the circumstances:

- The volunteer will be offered a meeting with a member of staff in order for the organisation to learn from their experience.
- When appropriate, staff will offer the volunteer reasonable support to find an alternative volunteering role.
- Any outstanding expenses will be paid within 20 working days of receipt of a claim being submitted
- If 60 hours or more have been completed, we will provide a reference, on request.

Volunteer will:

- Return all property which may have been loaned to them
- Returns all identity badges
- Complete and submit any outstanding expenses claim within a month

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

SI no	Risk	Action/Mitigation
1	Older volunteers, volunteers whose first language is not English or those who live in over-crowded housing might face digital challenges and might not have access to online training	Signpost to digital literacy support

2	Religion: Volunteers who might practice religious observations/days might not be available to volunteer on these days	To check volunteer monitoring form if volunteers actively practice religion and accommodate volunteer hours accordingly after consultation with volunteer
3	Religion: Venues for work socialising may not be suitable for volunteers/staff/board members from certain religious groups because of dietary beliefs and may lead to non-participation	To choose venues suitable for everyone irrespective of beliefs
4	Disability: Volunteers with additional needs may not be able to engage if reasonable adjustments are not made	Inquire and meet reasonable support needs based on HWG capacity and financial resources