

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Introduction

1. Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire is the independent consumer champion for health and social care, working to ensure local voices are able to influence the delivery and design of local services. Volunteering is one way that local people are genuinely involved in this work.
2. 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 the payment of actual out of pocket expenses. For Healthwatch 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 services.

Benefits of Volunteers

3. The benefits to Healthwatch of volunteers:
 - Volunteers can bring a perspective to our work that reflects the views of the local community
 - They bring credibility to Healthwatch - giving their time for free suggests that the work we do is of value to the local population
 - Volunteers can help to extend services we currently offer
 - Members of the public are more likely to identify with members of their own community, particularly if those communities are seldom heard.

Benefits for Volunteers

4. The benefits of volunteering with Healthwatch include:
 - Provides people with new challenges and a chance to learn new skills
 - Volunteering can be a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities
 - By donating their time, volunteers can ‘give something back’ to health and social care in the East Riding
 - Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people
 - Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding
 - Volunteering can improve health and wellbeing!

Recruitment

5. All volunteer opportunities will be discussed and approved by the Board of Directors Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire. A lead Director with responsibilities for volunteering will oversee delivery of this policy.

6. The Board will delegate the Healthwatch Delivery Manager as the 'appointed person' with responsible for the recruitment, support and supervision of volunteers within Healthwatch.
7. Volunteering opportunities within Healthwatch will be advertised via our website, e-newsletter, the local East Riding Volunteer Centre, and other appropriate means locally, taking into account the principles of our Equal Opportunities and Diversity policies. Task Descriptions for volunteering opportunities will be prepared and provided to applicants to consider together with other relevant information. Applicants will be asked to complete a short application form (help can be given with this if necessary) for the volunteering opportunities they are interested in.

Selection Process

8. Applications will be reviewed by the lead Director and Healthwatch Delivery Manager and suitable applicants will then be invited to attend an interview with the lead Director and Delivery Manager. The purpose of the interview is to:
 - Explain and discuss the voluntary opportunity and commitment involved
 - Verify the background information already supplied by the potential volunteer
 - Explore any relevant skills, interests and experiences which the potential volunteer may bring to the work
 - Assess whether the potential volunteer will be able to carry out the role description and what training or other assistance might be required in order to enable this.
9. Potential volunteers will also be asked to provide details of two references who know the person in either a work or social context. Acceptance as a volunteer with Healthwatch will be subject to receipt of two satisfactory references. The two references, as well as a satisfactory clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (if relevant to the role) will be taken up prior to the start of any volunteer role.
10. The Interview Panel will inform the applicant of their reasons for their decision. Successful applicants will then be invited to an induction event. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of the reasons why Healthwatch do not feel they are acceptable volunteers. If potential volunteers are unhappy with this decision they can appeal in writing to the Chair of Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire. The Chair will review the evidence and make the final decision.

Induction, Trial Period and Training

11. The purpose of an induction is to welcome volunteers to Healthwatch and make them feel a valued addition to the team. Induction will also cover volunteer responsibilities under various Healthwatch policies. The appointed person (or a delegated staff member) will deliver induction.
12. There will be a trial period of at least four weeks to give Healthwatch and the volunteer time to discover if they are suited to each other. A review will be made at the end of this period by the appointed person and the lead Director. If the volunteer is not suitable for their role the reasons will be explained in writing. Volunteers unhappy with this decision can appeal in writing to the Chair of Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire. The Chair will review the evidence and make the final decision.
13. Training will be given to volunteers to enable them to develop and improve their performance and personal development, taking into consideration the needs of Healthwatch and the resources available.
14. Training needs will be discussed during support and supervision sessions.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

15. Our volunteers can expect to:
 - Be given a Task Description for their role outlining the tasks they will be asked to perform and the level of responsibility which goes with them
 - Be given clear information about the roles of volunteers and paid staff within Healthwatch
 - Not to be asked to cover work that is or has been paid employment
 - Carry out a role which is distinct from, but seen as an enhancement to, paid employment ;
 - Have out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed in line with our policy
 - Receive the same insurance cover as paid staff
 - 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
 - Express their concerns or grievances through our Problem Solving Procedure.
16. Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire expects its volunteers to:
 - Do their best when carrying out their roles
 - Follow our policies, procedures and good practice guidelines
 - Not act in a way which would bring harm to the Healthwatch reputation
 - To treat with respect our Directors, staff, 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.

Support and Supervision

17. The appointed person and other staff members will offer support to volunteers. The appointed person or other staff member delegated with this task, will have regular supervision meetings with volunteers to discuss any problems, issues or training needs.

Insurance

18. All volunteers are covered by our Insurance Policy.

Expenses

19. We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All out-of-pocket expenses, if required, 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. The appointed person must countersign this form to authorise payment of these expenses (please refer to the Volunteer Expenses Policy for further details).

Confidentiality

20. Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire has an explicit Confidentiality Policy that all members of our Board, staff, and volunteers must adhere to.

Resolving Problems

21. The relationship between Healthwatch and our volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that we are able to maintain our high standards of quality and service, and it is also important that our volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to our service.
22. If volunteers have a complaint or grievance about our organisation, a member of staff, or another volunteer, they will be supported using our Problem Solving Procedure. If your role as a volunteer does not meet with our organisations standards, how this will be dealt with is also explained in our Problem Solving Procedure.

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