

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURE

1. We hope volunteering for Healthwatch will be a positive experience, but sometimes things can go wrong. We hope that most problems can be resolved informally but there may be occasions when this is not possible. Although we do not have legal duties towards volunteers and do not wish to create a contractual relationship with them, we feel it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with fairly, openly and consistently. To help with this we have put the following procedures in place.

If a volunteer has a complaint about Healthwatch, a member of staff or another volunteer

2. The volunteer should first raise the matter informally with the Healthwatch Delivery Manager, who will carry out an investigation and try to resolve the problem.
3. If the complaint is against the Healthwatch Delivery Manager, or the outcome of an investigation is not to the volunteer's satisfaction, the volunteer must make the complaint, in writing, to the Healthwatch Board Director with lead responsibility for volunteers. A meeting between the volunteer and Board Director will be arranged, an investigation carried out and appropriate action taken. The Board Director will then contact the volunteer, in writing, with the outcome.
4. Depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, the Board Director may enlist the help and support of the Healthwatch Chair and/or the full Board to resolve the matter.

If there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour

5. Many 'problems' are simply due to training needs, lack of support, inappropriate roles and so on and can be resolved by an informal chat. Where informal measures are not enough the Healthwatch Delivery Manager will raise and discuss the issue in a formal meeting with the volunteer. If it is felt necessary a verbal warning may be issued, with steps agreed to improve conduct.
6. If the issue is still not resolved the Healthwatch Delivery Manager and/or Board Director with lead responsibility for volunteering will meet the volunteer. This may result in a formal written warning being issued with an agreed plan to improve behaviour, with the understanding that following another warning the volunteer will be dismissed as a Healthwatch volunteer.

7. If a volunteer is believed to have behaved in a manner that has or could seriously affect the reputation of Healthwatch they will be immediately suspended by the Healthwatch Delivery Manager, while an investigation is carried out by the Board Director with lead responsibility for volunteering. The results of the investigation will then be referred to the Healthwatch Board for decision, who will then write to the volunteer advising them of the decision reached of the investigation and action taken.
8. The types of serious problems which would warrant immediate suspension include but are not limited to:
 - a. Theft
 - b. Misuse of our equipment or facilities
 - c. Acts of violence
 - d. Malicious damage or comments
 - e. Failure to respect confidentiality
 - f. Breach of health and safety agreements
 - g. Harassment
 - h. Discrimination on the grounds of disability/ethnicity/religion/gender/sexuality/age
 - i. Abuse or other offensive behaviour
 - j. Volunteering under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse

General Points

9. In all cases volunteers have the right to be accompanied at any meetings by a nominated person of their choice.
10. All complaints will be treated confidentially and will only be discussed by those directly involved in trying to resolve the situation.
11. We aim to deal with all problems as quickly as possible and within two weeks at the most, from receiving a formal letter of complaint. If this is not possible we will keep the volunteer informed of when the matter will be resolved.
12. Volunteers can appeal decisions, in writing, to the Chair of Healthwatch and will receive a written response within 14 working days. The Chairs' decision on the matter will be final.

May 2013