

Our Volunteer Policy

Find out more about volunteering with us



Our Volunteer Policy

Policy Statement

Healthwatch Darlington is committed to involving a diverse range of volunteers to support our work within the community. Volunteers are an important resource in helping us achieve our aims and bring a wealth of expertise, knowledge, experience and skills. Our volunteer roles aim to provide volunteers with a rewarding, worthwhile and enjoyable experience.

This policy sets out the principles of how we involve volunteers, and what volunteers can expect by way of support whilst volunteering with us.

A volunteer is anyone who freely chooses to support Healthwatch Darlington, by giving their time, skills and expertise without financial remuneration beyond out-of-pocket expenses, to help deliver our services.

Listed below are our principles relating to a range of areas that underpin volunteer involvement in our activities.

Recruitment of volunteers

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion at all stages of recruitment and selection of our volunteers. Attracting volunteers, shortlisting, interviewing and selection will always be carried out without regard to protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Volunteer role descriptions are available to outline the types of volunteering opportunity available. These role descriptions should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant.

We will work with people to understand and remove barriers to volunteering and regularly review our volunteering involvement practices to ensure we are inclusive and that people from all sections of the community can volunteer. We will make reasonable adjustments where possible to meet the access needs of potential volunteers.

Prospective volunteers will be asked to complete a simple application form and will be invited to take part in an interview to share their aspirations and experiences. This will not be a competitive process; we are looking for whether a person is suitable for the role. The potential volunteer will also be thinking about whether Healthwatch is the right fit for them.

Two written references will be required to help confirm suitability. For some roles which fall within the scope of regulated activity, we will also be asking for a Disclosure and Barring System (DBS) check.

Once all background checks and induction training is completed, and suitability is agreed, then a volunteer can be confirmed into the team.

Each volunteer will have a named contact who will provide guidance and support throughout their time volunteering at Healthwatch Darlington.

Induction and training

We recognise volunteers bring with them a wide range of skills and knowledge. However, to ensure that all volunteers are equipped for the role, each volunteer will undergo an induction and training process prior to appointment and will attend refresher training on a three-year cycle.

Induction training will include the following areas:

- claiming expenses
- code of conduct
- conflicts of interest
- health and safety
- safeguarding
- confidentiality
- equality diversity and inclusion

An introduction to Healthwatch and role specific training will also be provided. Healthwatch England has an [online induction module for volunteers](#).

A Volunteer Handbook will be provided as part of a new volunteer's induction training, which includes information relevant to their role. The Handbook includes a Volunteer Agreement which all volunteers are expected to sign.

Expenses

We will reimburse volunteers for reasonable out of pocket expenses, supported by valid receipts and claim forms, in accordance with our volunteer expenses policy provided within our Volunteer Handbook.

1-2-1s and support

Each volunteer will have a designated member of Healthwatch staff to support them. This will include regular mutually agreed contact, and an annual review, both of which will provide opportunities for the volunteer to discuss their role, share feedback and raise development and support needs.

Health and safety

All volunteers will be provided with the appropriate information and training to complete their volunteer activities safely. Volunteers must take reasonable care of themselves and others while volunteering for us, and follow the guidance given to them for their role.

Healthwatch Darlington provides Employee Liability and Public Liability cover for all volunteers whilst working on Healthwatch Darlington activities.

Healthwatch Darlington does not provide motor insurance cover. Volunteers must hold appropriate motor insurance cover if they use vehicles while volunteering. We recommend volunteers talk to their insurance company to confirm this. Volunteers will be asked to sign to confirm they have appropriate cover before we can reimburse mileage costs. NCVO has [information](#) on this issue.

Confidentiality and data protection

All volunteers will be asked to comply with our confidentiality policy, which is provided in our Volunteer Handbook.

Healthwatch Darlington complies with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and will treat in confidence the information it holds about volunteers. Volunteers have the right to request to see all information held about them by Healthwatch Darlington.

Volunteer information will be stored in a safe and secure location and will not be kept for longer than necessary in accordance with our data protection storage and retention policy.

Problem solving and complaint procedures for volunteers

We aim to make volunteering a positive experience for volunteers, but we know that sometimes problems can occur. Wherever possible, problems will be resolved through informal means, and volunteers are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have with their nominated member of staff, the Chief Executive Officer, or the Chair, as appropriate.

We have a procedure to help resolve problems that may arise, which ensures fair and equitable treatment and can be found in the Volunteer handbook.

Moving on

For one reason or another people stop volunteering. This may be due to finding employment, starting a new volunteering role at another organisation or change in circumstances. In all these, and other cases, we aim to provide a positive end of role experience for each volunteer as they move on from Healthwatch Darlington.

We will have an exit discussion, to hear your experiences and learn from these experiences as well as arranging an opportunity for other volunteers to say 'Goodbye'.

Equality, diversity and inclusion statement

We are committed to building a diverse organisation that is responsive to the needs of all members of our local community. All Healthwatch Darlington volunteers are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in accordance with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Volunteers are also responsible for treating people, including service users and Healthwatch staff with dignity and respect. We will also monitor the impact of the equality, diversity and inclusion statement.

Review of policy document

Our Board will review the effectiveness of the volunteer policy every three years. Any amendments to this policy will require a simple majority of board members voting in favour.

The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch Darlington as soon as is practicable.

Volunteer policy	
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