



# Volunteer Policy

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 Healthwatch Warwickshire welcomes volunteers in a wide range of roles within the organisation. We recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make in helping us in our mission. Healthwatch Warwickshire seeks to involve volunteers to:

- ensure our services meet the needs of our clients
- provide new skills and perspectives
- increase our contact with the local community we serve

## **2 Definition of Volunteer**

2.1 A volunteer is someone who spends time doing any non-compulsory, unpaid activity which is of benefit to others.

2.2 Volunteers shall not be considered employees of Healthwatch Warwickshire neither will they be required to take on responsibilities which should only be given to paid members of staff.

2.3 All volunteers will receive appropriate reimbursement of expenses including travel to and from their volunteering opportunity (see section 12.1 Expenses).

## **3 Organisational Commitment**

3.1 The Board of Healthwatch Warwickshire supports the use of volunteers and through its officers will ensure -

1. *that volunteers:*

- Are properly integrated into the organisational structure enabling them to contribute effectively to its work;
- Will not be used to replace and reduce the work of paid employees.

2. *that paid employees:*

- At all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will seek to involve them in their work;
- Where possible, provide work for volunteers that is satisfying and that can lead to personal development. Employees will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing access to relevant training for them to do their work effectively.

3.2 The overall responsibility for volunteers rests with the Chief Executive. However, day-to-day management rests with employees, as appropriate.

## **4 Equal Opportunities and Diversity**

4.1 Healthwatch Warwickshire is committed to equal opportunities and its Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy is located in the Volunteer Handbook. Volunteers are expected to have an understanding and commitment to this policy and this is integrated throughout the induction process.

## **5      *The Role of Volunteers***

5.1      Volunteers are people who work to help Healthwatch Warwickshire achieve its objectives for no financial reward other than reasonable out of pocket expenses. Current paid employees of Healthwatch Warwickshire will not be engaged as volunteers within the organisation. Healthwatch Warwickshire believes that volunteers are vital to the organisation and the functioning of communities. Volunteers, employees, and the Healthwatch Warwickshire Board work in partnership in the achievement of the organisation's objectives.

## **6      *Expectations/Responsibilities/Opportunities***

6.1      Healthwatch Warwickshire expects its volunteers to be realistic in their commitment and volunteers are expected to give as much or as little as they consider is appropriate to them. However, once a commitment is made Healthwatch Warwickshire expects its volunteers to fulfil this unless negotiated otherwise (please see the Volunteer Agreement).

6.3      All employees will be fully informed about the rights and responsibilities of volunteers as part of their own induction and through the approved working practices of Healthwatch Warwickshire.

6.4      Volunteers are encouraged to represent their views to Healthwatch management on all aspects of this organisation's work through any written or verbal communication, including volunteer meetings and individual volunteer reviews. In all areas not related to conditions of paid employment, volunteers will be covered by all the provisions of other Healthwatch Warwickshire policies.

## **7      *Recruitment and Selection***

7.1      Healthwatch Warwickshire believes that volunteering should be open to all and welcomes applications from anyone who wishes to volunteer. Our selection process ensures that all prospective volunteers complete an application form and provide the names of two referees. Once these have been received the prospective volunteer will be asked to invited to an informal interview this will help identify how best their skills, suitability and potential may be matched to appropriate volunteering opportunities.

## **8      *Volunteer Tasks/Role Descriptions***

8.1      There will be a specified range of tasks that volunteers will be asked to undertake. All volunteers will be given clear guidelines, and role descriptions/handbooks detailing the areas of work they are responsible for. Volunteers will be required to work within the boundaries described in these guidelines.

## **9      *Confidentiality, Security and Data Protection***

9.1      Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements as employees, as detailed in the Volunteer Handbook.

## **10 Induction and probation**

10.1 All volunteers are entitled to an individual induction programme to familiarise themselves with Healthwatch Warwickshire and a review will then take place after the volunteer has completed 3 months service to ensure that both parties feel that the role is correct and appropriate to the volunteer and Healthwatch Warwickshire.

10.2 If at the 3 month review, it is decided by the line manager not to continue to offer the volunteering opportunity, and there are no other suitable roles within Healthwatch Warwickshire, the volunteer will be offered a further “matching interview”, as detailed above.

## **11 Training**

11.1 Appropriate training for volunteers will be identified through individual training plans. These could be general training courses or training which is specific to the role of the volunteer. Training for volunteers will be offered free of charge.

## **12 Expenses**

12.1 An allowance of 45p per mile if using own transport to agreed volunteering role to and from the Volunteers place of volunteering.

Car parking fees to the value of the time required to complete their voluntary activity, as above, will be reimbursed on production of receipts.

Reasonable public transport will be reimbursed, as above, on production of receipts.

Expenses should be claimed on the monthly Volunteer Expenses Form. Receipts must accompany any expenses submitted, other than mileage. Volunteers need to submit a Volunteer Expenses claim form to the Healthwatch Warwickshire office regularly which is then paid by cheque/BACS. Receipts submitted more than 3 months after the voluntary activity was completed will not be processed unless there has been an exceptional circumstance, e.g. long term illness.

## **13 Insurance**

13.1 All volunteers are covered by the public liability insurance policy of Healthwatch Warwickshire whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on behalf of Healthwatch Warwickshire, provided this is within the boundaries of role/task descriptions and/or handbooks.

## **14 Health and Safety**

14.1 All volunteers are covered by the Healthwatch Warwickshire Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which is kept in the Volunteer Handbook. All volunteers based in Healthwatch Warwickshire offices will go through the Risk Assessment procedure as part of induction.

## **15 *Internet and Email usage***

15.1 Volunteers must become familiar and comply with this policy, as detailed in the Volunteer Handbook.

## **16 *Support and Supervision***

16.1 All volunteers will have a designated supervisor. The supervisor will agree objectives with the volunteer. Additional support from the Chief Executive (or their designated staff) is available to focus on recognition for positive efforts and guidance for strengthening areas of weakness.

## **17 *Timesheets***

17.1 Recording volunteer hours is extremely valuable for a variety of purposes, most importantly it increases recognition within the organisation of the volunteer contribution and can assist us with volunteer references. A cumulative log of volunteers' hours will be kept on a monthly basis by a nominated officer of Healthwatch Warwickshire.

## **18 *Retirement/Termination of Volunteering***

18.1 The principle underlying retirement/termination of volunteering will depend on the tasks the volunteer undertakes and the individual's continuing fitness to perform the task. The task description will be reviewed at supervision sessions with line managers to ensure that both the volunteer's and Healthwatch Warwickshire objectives are being met. Should a volunteer have any concerns or issues, then this should be raised in the first instance with their supervisor in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Volunteer Handbook. Similarly, any complaints or problems associated with the individual will be investigated in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Volunteer Handbook.

18.2 If the volunteer is no longer able to fulfil the volunteering role, an alternative role should be sought for the volunteer, with the volunteer's agreement. If a suitable alternative within Healthwatch Warwickshire is not available, an interview should be arranged with their local Volunteer Centre in an effort to locate one.

## **19 *Monitoring of Volunteer Policy***

19.1 This policy is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is still appropriate to Healthwatch Warwickshire. Volunteers and paid employees contribute to this review.

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