

healthwatch Rochdale

Volunteering Policy

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Introduction

Healthwatch Rochdale is an independent voice for the people of the Rochdale borough. We are here to listen to the experiences of Rochdale borough residents and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided.

We listen to what people have to say about their experiences of using health and social care services and feed this information through to those responsible for providing the services. We also ensure services are held to account for how they use this feedback to influence the way services are designed and run.

Mission Statement

We are the independent voice of local people in challenging and influencing health and social care provision in the Rochdale Borough.

In line with our Mission Statement Healthwatch Rochdale seeks to actively involve its volunteers to:

- Ensure our services meet the needs of local residents
- Provide new skills and perspectives
- Increase our engagement with the diverse communities of the Borough of Rochdale.

Scope and Definitions

This policy provides the parameters in which Healthwatch Rochdale (HWR) use Volunteers to enhance the work we do across the Borough of Rochdale.

Volunteering can be 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, as stated in our Expenses Policy.

Volunteering for HWR means people offer us their skills and expertise and a commitment to support the work of the staff in order to support public engagement in the design and delivery of health and social care services. In exchange, HWR ensure they are well supported with continuous training, development and by learning new skills. Volunteering is not a paid role, however out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed such as travel and food allowances. When issues arise around volunteering which are not answered within this policy, HWR have a clear complaints procedure for further advice and support on the best viable way to proceed.

Key principles

- HWR recognises that volunteers have a particular role to play in terms of widening the awareness across the Borough of Rochdale for HWR both as an organisation and the statutory roles it fulfils.
- All Volunteers recruited agree to uphold the Nolan Principles of Public Life. The Nolan Principles are general principles of conduct that underpin public life, first published in 1995 and recognised by HWR as integral to the work carried out by the organisation and are laid out in the volunteer handbook and Code of Conduct policy.
- We want to ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the Healthwatch Rochdale organisational structure and ensure that mechanisms are in place to ensure our volunteers can contribute to our work.
- HWR does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff and we recognise that our volunteers require satisfying work and personal development opportunities, which is offered as part of our training process.

The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of the involvement of HWR volunteers.

Recruitment

The Board will delegate the Engagement and Volunteer Manager as the appointed person with responsibility for the recruitment, support and supervision of volunteers within Healthwatch Rochdale.

Volunteering opportunities within Healthwatch Rochdale will be advertised via HWR's website, social media platforms, e-bulletin, Action Together volunteering database and other appropriate means locally. A role description for opportunities will be prepared and provided to applicants to consider, this could be for example a Core Volunteer role or an Advisory Group member. Applicants will be asked to complete a short application form for the volunteering opportunities they are interested in and attend an informal interview to find out what they would like to do, skills, suitability for the role, any reasonable adjustments required and how best their potential might be realised as a volunteer for HWR.

When someone has talents and skills which cannot be used well within HWR they will be signposted to Action Together, based in Rochdale, which will help them to access other suitable volunteering opportunities.

Selection process

Applications will be reviewed by the Engagement and Volunteer Manager and suitable applicants will then be invited to attend an informal interview. The Purpose of the interview is to:

- Explain and discuss the volunteering opportunity and commitment involved
- Verify the background information already supplied by the volunteer
- Explore any relevant skills, interests, and experiences which the potential volunteer may bring to the work
- Clarify any additional needs the volunteer may have or reasonable adjustments that need to be made
- Ensure suitability for the role

Potential volunteers will also be asked to provide details of two references who know the person in either a work or social context. The acceptance of a volunteer to Healthwatch Rochdale will be subject to satisfactory references. A DBS will only be required for Volunteers wishing to take part in our Enter and View volunteering.

The interview panel will inform the applicant of their reasons for their decision. Successful applicants will then be invited to complete the induction process. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of the decisions why HWR do not feel they are suitable for the role. HWR will also ensure that the applicant, if unsuitable, will be supported to explore roles with Action Together, the local infrastructure organisation for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Rochdale. If potential volunteers are unhappy with this decision, they can appeal in writing to the Chair of HWR. The Chair will review the evidence and make the final decision.

Induction, Trial Period and Training

All volunteers will receive an induction into HWR. The purpose of an induction is to welcome volunteers to HWR and make them feel a valued addition to the team. Induction will also cover volunteer responsibilities under various HWR policies such as: Confidentiality, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Health and Safety, Code of Conduct, Safeguarding and information on HWR.

At the end of the induction process a review will be made by the Engagement and Volunteer Manager. If the volunteer is not suitable for their role the reasons will be explained in writing.

Volunteers who are unhappy with the decision can appeal in writing to the Chair of HWR. The Chair will review the evidence and make the final decision.

Volunteers will have regular support and supervision. The Engagement and Volunteer Manager will have regular meetings with volunteers to discuss any progress with the role, problems or issues, training, gather feedback and answer any questions.

Ongoing training needs will be discussed during support and supervision sessions. Further additional training will be given to volunteers to enable them to develop and improve their performance and personal development, taking into consideration the needs of HWR and the resources available. Additionally, there will be other training opportunities available which will give volunteers knowledge, understanding and skills to support them for specific roles. Volunteers will need to meet the competencies outlined in any training.

Recognition

HWR value their volunteers and want them to leave HWR with recognition of the contributions they have made and skills they have developed. As well as regular feedback through support and supervision sessions, we will provide:

- Certificates for attending any training run by HWR
- A Certificate of Volunteering at the end of their time volunteering with us, detailing their role, achievement, and number of hours they have volunteered with us
- For volunteers who have volunteered with HWR for more than 20 hours, HWR will be willing to act as a referee for them in the future
- Feature in our communications such as social media and newsletters

Volunteer Voice

Volunteers at HWR are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning HWR and any areas of its work. Healthwatch Rochdale will do this by completing an annual volunteer survey to give volunteers the opportunity to feedback, the volunteer survey will be presented annually at a Healthwatch Rochdale public board meeting which is held in public, to highlight our transparency at Healthwatch Rochdale. The Engagement and Volunteer Manager will also utilise appropriate information arising from the regular 1-2-1 support sessions to ensure the volunteers' voice is heard.

Expenses

HWR values its volunteers and wants to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, if required, will be reimbursed including expense for travel, and meals (if a volunteer is engaging for a minimum of 2 hours). To claim expenses, a volunteer expenses form must be completed, and relevant receipts attached. The Chief Executive Officer must countersign this form to authorise payment of these expenses as laid out in HWR Expenses Reward and Recognition Policy. The preferred method of payment is by BACS, however a cheque can be issued where necessary but may take longer.

Insurance

Volunteers are covered by Healthwatch Rochdale's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on HWR's behalf.

Confidentiality

All volunteers must adhere to the HWR Confidentiality Policy. The Confidentiality Policy is available on the HWR website:

<https://healthwatchrochdale.org.uk/news/2022-11-21/our-policies> A full copy of which is available upon request.

Code of Conduct

All volunteers must adhere to the HWR Code of Conduct Policy. The Code of Conduct Policy is available on the HWR website:

<https://healthwatchrochdale.org.uk/find-policies> A full copy of which is available upon request.

Health and Safety

Volunteers within HWR are covered by the Health and Safety Policy. The Health & Safety Policy is available on the HWR website: <https://healthwatchrochdale.org.uk/find-policies> A full copy of which is available upon request.

Risk Assessments are also in place to cover volunteers when engaging in opportunities for HWR.

Equal Opportunities

HWR strive to ensure that we recruit volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds and protected characteristics.

HWR operates an Equal Opportunity policy in respect of both paid members of staff and its volunteers. Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding of, and commitment to, our Equal Opportunity Policy. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is available on the HWR website: <https://healthwatchrochdale.org.uk/find-policies> A full copy of which is available upon request.

HWR are also a recipient of the FREDIE award.

Resolving Problems/Complaints

The relationship between HWR and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that HWR can maintain high standards of quality service and it is also important that our volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to HWR.

We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage. If volunteers have a complaint or grievance about HWR, a member of staff or another volunteer, they will be supported using HWR's extensive range of policies and procedures to ensure the matter is dealt with in an appropriate manner. However, if a volunteer should have a complaint that needs addressing HWR have a complaints policy and procedure through which to register their concern. The complaints policy is available on the HWR website: <https://healthwatchrochdale.org.uk/find-policies> A full copy of which is available upon request.

Volunteer Agreement and Voluntary Work Outlines

Each HWR volunteer will have a volunteer agreement establishing what Healthwatch Rochdale undertakes to provide for them. In addition, volunteers must agree to a written outline of the specific work that they will be undertaking on behalf of HWR.

NB: neither of these documents are a contract; HWR has no intention of creating a contract with any of its volunteers, but each volunteer will receive a volunteer handbook outlining key information and guidance on their work with HWR.

Logging Hours

All volunteers at HWR are required to log the hours they are involved in every month with the Engagement and Volunteer Manager. This will then be input into our systems.