

Volunteer Handbook

What you can expect from volunteering



About Us

The Government's Health and Social Care Act (2012) established Healthwatch as the new 'independent consumer champion' for adults and children who use health and care services. Its aim when establishing Healthwatch was to 'achieve the best health and care services that are shaped by local needs and experiences'.

Healthwatch has two distinct parts: Healthwatch England and local Healthwatch. Healthwatch England is a statutory committee of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC regulates and inspects health and social care services so local Healthwatch can raise issues of concern directly with them if they have serious concerns. Healthwatch England provides advice, guidance, and support to local Healthwatch.

Every Healthwatch is commissioned in each area by the local Council, who provide the funding to a local Healthwatch from a central Government pot.

This Handbook is for volunteers supporting the work of Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland operating under the banner of Healthwatch South Tees (HWST) are the voice of local people, finding out about their experiences of using health and social care services to identify what needs to be improved.

Volunteer Handbook

We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer with HWST. Volunteers are central to our work, and we can't be as effective without you.

The aim of this Volunteer Handbook is to give you some background information about who we are and what we do, an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of our volunteers and a summary of the policies and procedures we have in place to support and protect you.

These policies and procedures also ensure we maintain the highest possible standards, meet our legal responsibilities, and ensures Healthwatch South Tees provides a consistently high level of support to those in our communities who use health and social care services now and in the future.

There are thousands of volunteers across Healthwatch nationally. Volunteers get involved for a variety of reasons. Some want to make a positive difference to the lives of people; others want to develop new skills, and some simply want to meet new people and have fun.

What You Can Expect from Us

- We want to make sure you enjoy your role and get the most out of it. You will be supported by the Volunteer Engagement Officer (VEO) and as our commitment to you, we will: -
- Always treat you with respect, consideration, and appreciation.
- Ensure you have a clear idea of your responsibilities whilst volunteering.
- Give you information about support available to help you carry out your role and introduce you to those you will be volunteering with.
- Provide you with support through regular meetings or discussions.
- Offer you fair, honest, and timely feedback on your contribution.
- Update you on how your contribution has made a difference.
- Offered training to make sure you feel happy and confident in your volunteer role.

HWST has signed up to the Tees Valley Infrastructure Partnership (TVIP) Volunteer Charter and as such have agreed to set of pledges to work towards to making our volunteering offer as positive and valuable as possible.

Volunteer Expectations

To ensure you get the most out of your role: -

- Always treat other HWST volunteers, staff and supporters with respect, consideration, and appreciation.
- Maintain a professional manner when representing HWST.
- Act in a way that doesn't discriminate against or exclude anyone.
- If your circumstances change, or are unavailable for certain dates, please let us know as soon as possible.
- If you don't understand any aspect of your role or responsibilities, please ask your VEO who can support you.

Roles

Volunteers support the engagement work of HWST by feeding back the views of local people and telling us what matters to those who use health and social care services.

Volunteers will be committed to improving health and care services and be willing to support and promote the work of Healthwatch South Tees positively in their community and sometimes beyond.

You might decide to undertake more than one role, or you may choose only to carry out certain roles and/or specialise in particular areas where you have specific skills or have special interest.

Our Volunteer Role Description guide tells you more about the roles available with Healthwatch South Tees.

Policies and Procedures

As a volunteer, you'll need to be aware of the following policies and procedures:

Expenses

We will pay all volunteers agreed out of pocket expenses on presentation of valid receipts and claims forms. The authorised claim along with receipts should be sent to finance and will be paid within 14 days. Please note that 14 days applies to authorised and signed forms, any missing information or signatures will be sent back to the volunteer supporter and not be processed until corrected.

Gifts

Giving or receiving gifts might give the impression of favouritism and could raise expectations of the level of support you can provide in your role. As such, we ask that volunteers don't give or receive personal gifts to or from staff or anyone receiving support services from HWST.

Accidents, Incidents, and Insurance

All accidents and incidents must be reported to your VEO as soon as possible. If you feel that it's a real emergency, please contact the emergency services immediately.

All registered volunteers are covered by our Personal Accident Insurance. All volunteers will be made aware of how to record accidents, incidents and near misses during induction with their VEO.

Personal Safety and I.D. Badges

You will have provided us with an emergency contact (if not can you please do so), who we will contact in the unlikely event of an emergency. If it is required for your role, you'll be issued with a HWST volunteer ID badge which you should always have with you when carrying out your activities.

Boundaries

Clear boundaries are important for volunteers and staff. They enable us to carry out a service according to agreed expectations and ensures that everyone receives the same quality of service.

We realise that volunteers and staff may sometimes have contact with Healthwatch South Tees stakeholders in a personal capacity—as friends, family, or

colleagues. In this situation, please take care to avoid any apparent conflict of interest and declare this to the VEO as soon as possible prior to carrying out our HWST activity.

Confidentiality

HWST operates within our Confidentiality Policy, which incorporates the Data Protection Act. Volunteers must respect this and are provided with policy induction training to ensure they are aware of how this applies to them.

Should confidentiality issues arise, it is the responsibility of the VEO to decide on a course of action, with support from the Project Lead.

Safeguarding

All our volunteers are required to undergo safeguarding training as part of their induction process. This will equip you with the safeguarding skills to act appropriately and confidently to protect the children and vulnerable adults you may come into contact with as well as yourself.

Data Protection

Before we collect, store, or use data about someone, the law requires us to make sure we have that person's consent to do so. The way we do this is by making sure we work within our data protection policy/procedures. You may, in your volunteer role with us, have access to and handle the personal information of the people you come into contact with and therefore you must be aware of these procedures.

Diversity

HWST is committed to understanding, accepting, and appreciating individual difference. In practice, this means treating everyone with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual and their experience. HWST will not tolerate discrimination against others based on (but not limited to) age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

No Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted on Healthwatch property or when staff and volunteers are involved with Healthwatch activities.

Car Drivers

It's important to note that if you're taking part in an activity for us that involves using your car, you must inform your own insurers. Most insurance companies agree to cover car journeys at no extra charge. We require all volunteers to check this with your own insurance company and provide the VEO with evidence of this. Your car will not be covered by Healthwatch South Tees insurance. Where agreed, you can claim back your mileage cost for activities you've undertaken as part of our work.