

Volunteers Policy

Healthwatch Milton Keynes

April 2018

Version Control

Recommender	Maxine Taffetani, Chief Executive Officer
Reviewer	Health and Social Care Committee
Decision Maker	Hilda Kirkwood (Chair of Trustees)
Last Approved	Approved April 2018
Frequency of Review	Annually
Due for next review	April 2019



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1. Policy Statement

Volunteering at Healthwatch Milton Keynes provides people with a great opportunity to provide a channel for their colleagues, friends, families and communities to speak up about their experiences of health and social care, highlight good and poor practice and influence the way that care is designed and delivered.

At Healthwatch Milton Keynes volunteers are at the very heart of all we do. Healthwatch Milton Keynes' remit across the whole of health and social care, to all Milton Keynes residents and to all people accessing health and care within Milton Keynes is large, and challenging. That is why we consider our volunteers a critical and valuable resource that enables all local people to have a say in, and influence, provision of health and social care across Milton Keynes.

We are committed to delivering a high-quality volunteer programme and support to individual volunteers so that they're enabled to undertake volunteer activity safely, and effectively.

This policy sets out the framework for our volunteer programme, defines the purpose and function of volunteers within the organisation, and how they can expect to be treated,

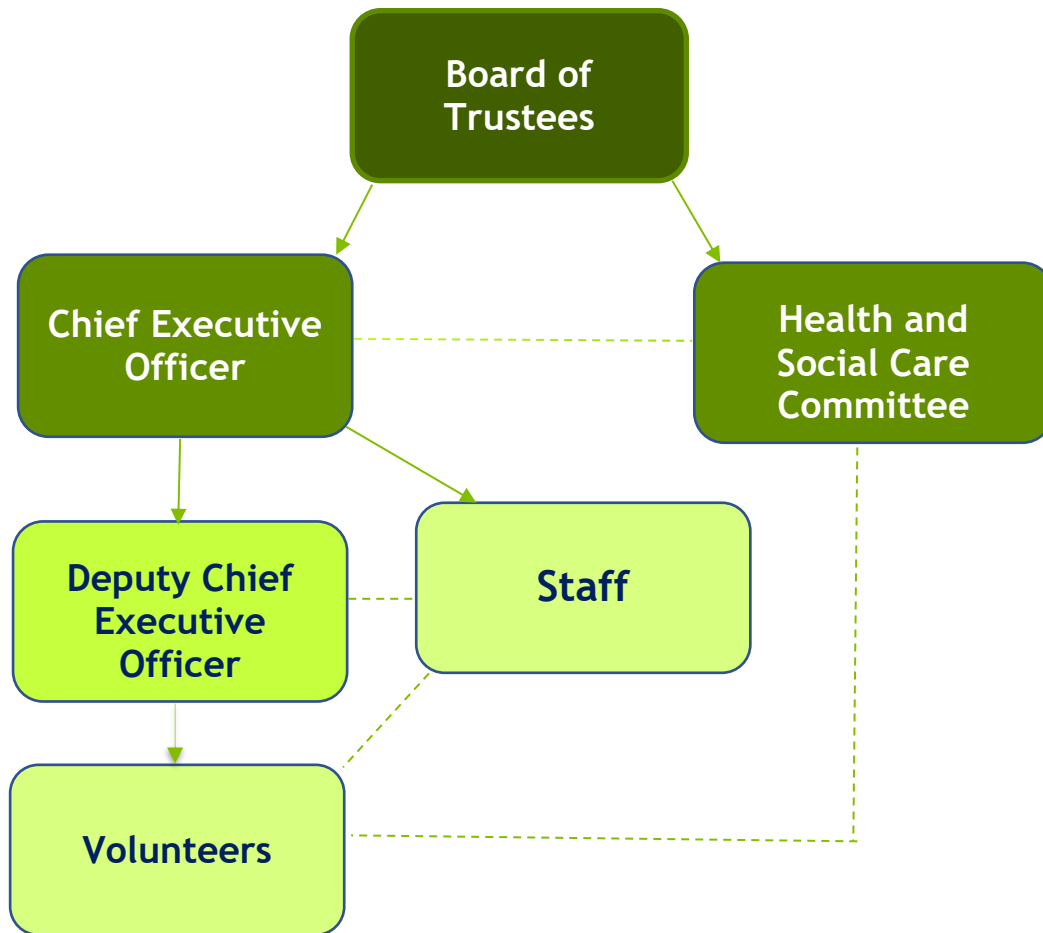
This policy is a guide to volunteers, and staff to help them understand:

- The role volunteers have in supporting the achievements of HWMK
- The different roles volunteers can undertake at HWMK
- Recruitment, induction, training and support available to volunteers
- The professional standards expected of Healthwatch volunteers
- Guidelines to claim travel and other expenses

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier should changes be identified. Reviews of the Volunteers Policy will be made in consultation with the Health and Social Care Committee.



2. Governance Structure of Healthwatch Milton Keynes



3. Volunteering for Healthwatch Milton Keynes

HWMK relies on volunteers to support the achievement of our mission. We look for people who are passionate about Health and Social Care and have the time, and skills to represent the organisation and the people of Milton Keynes, across a wide-range of activities. There are many roles volunteers can take on within the organisation.

3.1. Volunteer roles:

- **Local Community Champions** that promote the work of HWMK to all residents of Milton Keynes through the distribution of promotional material, and supporting promotional events.
- **Virtual Volunteers** that connect with the public and users of health and care services via online forums.
- **Health & Care Researchers** that support the organisation in keeping up to date with current media, policy and research news across local and national Health and Social Care issues.
- **Meeting facilitators** that support the organisation in hosting and facilitating events.
- **Mystery Shoppers** that test the patient experience of health and social care services.
- **Engagement volunteers** that meet with the public, listen and offer them opportunities to share their health and care experiences.
- **Reader Panel volunteers** that provide feedback on the content and accessibility of all literature produced by Healthwatch Milton Keynes such as reports and marketing material.
- **Enter and View Authorised Representatives** that undertake Enter and View visits, using their excellent interpersonal skills to talk to patients about their experience.

Each of these roles is supported by a Role Description, that outlines the experience, knowledge and skills that complement each role.

3.2. What we look for in a volunteer

Healthwatch Milton Keynes needs volunteers from all walks of life. Our remit covers all age groups and all backgrounds. We believe in recruiting a diverse bank of volunteers, with a broad range of experiences, so that we are best able to gather the patient voice through people who understand the needs and experiences of their peers.

Our needs around an individual's experience and skills vary depending on the volunteer opportunities available, or of interest to potential volunteers. However, as the main remit of HWMK is to talk and listen to people, there are some fundamental qualities we look for in any volunteer:

- An interest in health and social care, and the patient experience
- Good communication skills



- Enjoys building rapport with people, including people from different backgrounds
- Ability to be objective and recognise when this is challenging
- Willingness to participate in reflective practice
- A minimum time commitment of 5 hours per month (can be reviewed on an individual basis)

3.3. Recruitment of volunteers

Before recruiting volunteers, the Chief Executive Officer will consult with HWMK's Trustees and Health and Social Care Committee to agree a recruitment approach, based on the specific needs of the organisation/planned activity, at the time.

Advertising for new volunteers will be restricted to within Healthwatch Milton Keynes membership. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to extend volunteering opportunities outside the membership, where there is a strategic need to broaden recruitment channels.

When recruiting volunteers, we will outline:

- Healthwatch Milton Keynes' legislative remit, mission and objectives
- The current opportunities and role descriptions
- The difference a volunteer can make to our mission, and those we support
- What the volunteer can gain from working with the organisation
- What the volunteer will need access to, i.e. internet access
- How to apply and the recruitment process

HWMK will advertise volunteer opportunities through member newsletters and e-alerts. If volunteer recruitment extends beyond the membership, advertising may also include advertising on social media platforms, through local voluntary agencies and volunteer recruiters and press adverts.

The Application Process

When a potential volunteer expresses an interest in a role with HWMK, we will follow a standard applications process. This will include asking applicants for the following:

- Contact details
- Consent to hold and process their personal data for the purposes of the application
- Why they would like to volunteer for Healthwatch Milton Keynes
- What experience, interests or skills to they feel they could bring to the role
- The time they can commit to volunteering, and their availability
- Basic demographic information and any accessibility needs
- Details of two referees



Asylum seekers, volunteers from overseas and ex-offenders can volunteer. HWMK will seek appropriate guidance in such circumstances, to ensure all applicants are treated equally.

Volunteer interviews

HWMK follows an informal process for getting to know potential volunteers and will ensure a comfortable, safe space to explore what the applicant could bring to the organisation, and how Healthwatch can best support them to have a positive volunteering experience.

Informal interviews will explore an applicant's motivations for volunteering with HWMK and what HWMK can offer, in terms of volunteering opportunity, matched against their interests, skills and experience.

Although we ensure an informal approach to recruitment, Healthwatch Milton Keynes is a charity with statutory powers and a legislative remit that requires a high level of professionalism from paid staff and volunteers. Our volunteers may also interact with vulnerable adults, young people and children.

Therefore, at any interview, we will make sure that volunteer roles are well understood and give applicants time to raise any questions or concerns. It is important that volunteers understand the level of responsibility that some roles hold, and what training and support is available.

Written records of informal interviews must be kept.

References

References will be sought, once successful applicants have been notified and a start date has been agreed.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on volunteers

Depending on the roles that volunteers undertake for the organisation, there may be a requirement for the volunteer to complete a DBS check. We will request the checks following an assessment of the type of activities that volunteers will be involved in.

For volunteers undertaking Enter and View visits DBS checks are mandatory, as service providers will generally not allow access to patients without a DBS check. DBS checks are free for volunteers, and HWMK covers the cost of administration.

Unsuccessful applicants

If, after completing the recruitment process, we decide that an applicant is not suitable for the volunteer role available we will inform the applicant of the reasons for that decision. If possible, we will signpost to other volunteer opportunities locally.



Conversely, an applicant may decide that they do not want to volunteer for HWMK, after receiving all the information about the opportunities available. We will always ask for the reasons the applicant decided not to volunteer, as the information could help improve practice.

3.4 Induction and training

Because every volunteer is different, and the roles vary, HWMK does not have a rigorous formal induction process.

Each volunteer will have an initial induction meeting to assess and agree:

- What roles they will be undertaking in their volunteer capacity
- What training and support they need to become independent in their role
- A training and induction plan, which will include meetings with key people and guidance on policies to read
- How to effectively gather input from the public, pass it on to Healthwatch and provide feedback
- Dates of any group training i.e. Safeguarding, Enter and View Training etc...
- Dates of supervisions

We want to ensure that our volunteers value their journey with HWMK, as much as we value their support, so we will tailor induction packages around the person, not the other way around.

3.5 Conduct

All Healthwatch Milton Keynes volunteers represent the aims and values of HWMK, when they are undertaking volunteer activity for the organisation.

We will ensure that all volunteers are trained in understanding the aims and objectives of HWMK, our remit and the things we can't do as an organisation, our brand guidelines and how to talk about HWMK to members of the public.

Health and care experience can be a very emotive subject for people who feel affected by poor care, and Healthwatch have the challenge of turning people's experiences into an evidence-base that we use to influence change in the health and care system.

For Trustees, the CEO, the Deputy CEO and Health and Social Care Committee members, this can mean having very challenging conversations with commissioners and service providers. These conversations we believe should always be based on a solid foundation of mutual respect and values, with Healthwatch as a 'critical friend'.

Therefore, it is imperative to the good reputation of Healthwatch Milton Keynes, that all volunteers conduct themselves with professionalism, objectivity and represent an independent perspective, regardless of their personal views.



Supervision is available on request, if volunteers find themselves struggling with conduct.

3.6 Expenses

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will cover reasonable travel expenses incurred by volunteers when undertaking activities for the organisation. You can find details about what you can claim for, and how in our Expenses Policy.

3.7 Supervision and support

At Healthwatch Milton Keynes, we know it is vital to provide good support and supervision to our volunteers. We will take time to understand what they find satisfying about their volunteering role, and listen any concerns they may have about the role or the organisation.

HWMK will provide regular opportunities for volunteers to meet as a group, to share learning and reflect on the activities they undertake, as well as opportunities to talk one-to-one with the CEO/Deputy CEO, at mutually agreeable frequencies, normally depending on the level of responsibility and time volunteers are giving to the organisation. Volunteers can request one-to-one support at any time, should they have any concerns they want to discuss.

By ensuring that volunteers are supported with a group and one-to-one supervision framework, any issues related to performance should be identified early, and volunteers can work together with managers to reflect on and address any issues.

Common types of poor performance by volunteers may include:

- Inappropriate behaviour towards staff, other volunteers, the public or professionals
- Poor timekeeping
- Unreliability
- Lack of skills and/or an unwillingness to develop and maintain necessary skills

Where more serious performance issues are highlighted, or minor performance issues continue even after being addressed as part of the ongoing support framework, a one-to-one session with the volunteer will be arranged at the nearest opportunity. Meetings will be held with the CEO/Deputy CEO and Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee.

In this meeting, the volunteer will be informed of the issue, the impact of the issue on the organisation and what needs to change. We will work with the volunteer to understand the root cause of the performance issues and put in place appropriate support, where required/reasonable e.g. additional training, change of role.

We will offer a plan and a timescale for improvement, adhere to it and make sure the volunteer understands that if they don't follow the plan, they may be asked to



leave. We will ensure that the volunteer's performance is observed first hand, where possible, and build in regular a review to track improvements.

If the organisation continues to receive proof, or strong evidence of poor performance and an agreed improvement plan isn't effective, formal disciplinary procedures will be launched. This procedure is detailed in the Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy.

3.8 Exit Interviews

When a volunteer takes the decision to end their volunteering role with HWMK, we will ask the volunteer to talk to us about their experience of volunteering with Healthwatch so that we are able to reflect on and improve our practice, such as revising roles to ensure they are still relevant and valuable, provide new opportunities for keeping volunteers involved and motivated and enable HWMK to continually improve how volunteers are organised.

4. Conflicts of Interest

Volunteers should declare and conflicts of interest they think they may have, during their application process, or to the CEO if conflict presents during their course of their volunteering. Details on HWMK's approach to conflicts of interest is outlined in our Conflict of Interest Policy.

5. Further Reading

There are a number of supporting policies that volunteers must read in conjunction with the Volunteers Policy. Protected time to read these policies will be agreed at induction meetings.

Additional policies:

- Expenses Policy
- Engagement and Participation Policy
- Issues Gathering and Reporting Guidelines
- Representing Healthwatch Guidelines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Confidentiality and GDPR Policy
- Complaints Procedures
- Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy
- Enter and View Policy (where appropriate to role)
- Use of Social Media Policy (where appropriate to role)

