



Policy Title: Volunteer Policy

Date: February 2025



Version Control

Version Number	Date	Revisions	By
1	May 2017	Original Policy Approved	Maxine Taffetani
1.1	June 2019	Full transfer to HWMK branded policy template. Amendments to	Maxine Taffetani
1.2	Nov 2021	Annual policy review. Substantive changes made to policy narrative. Application form and Volunteer Agreement Form added as annexes.	Maxine Taffetani
1.3	April 2024	Reviewed. Minor amendments to text and forms.	Maxine Taffetani
1.4	Feb 2025	Reviewed. Refreshed application form information. Inclusion of reference to REL Forum	Maxine Taffetani

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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 provide a vital role in the delivery of our statutory activities. Healthwatch Milton Keynes' remit spans across the whole of health and social care, to all Milton Keynes residents and to all people accessing health and care within Milton Keynes. The scope of our activity is broad and challenging. That is why we consider our volunteers a critical and valuable resource that enables all local people to speak out and influence the 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 acts as a guide to both volunteers and employees with regard to:

- The role that 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.

Purpose

By adopting this policy Healthwatch Milton Keynes aims to:

- Highlight and acknowledge the value of the contribution made by volunteers
- Reflect the purpose, values, standards and strategies of the organisation in its approach to involving volunteers
- Recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers
- Confirm Healthwatch Milton Keynes' commitment to involving volunteers in its work
- Establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers
- Ensure the ongoing quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the work carried out by our volunteers

This policy provides an overview of the activities carried out by volunteers currently and provides a basis for the expansion, if required, for the role of volunteers alongside paid staff. This document and the associated policy, procedure and guidance provide a framework for the involvement of volunteers.

Volunteering at Healthwatch Milton Keynes

Healthwatch Milton Keynes' mission is to champion people's rights and access to high-quality health and social care. Volunteers make a vital contribution to the achievement of our aims. We recognise the added value that volunteers bring to our organisation.

Within Healthwatch Milton Keynes volunteers are involved in:

- Board of Trustees
- Enter and view authorised representatives
- Delivering our activities including engagement events, stalls, service audits and mystery shopping activities
- Promoting awareness of Healthwatch Milton Keynes
- Resident and Lived Experience Forum
- Readers panel

Healthwatch Milton Keynes aims to have a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship with our volunteers; with their involvement informing and developing

our work, and our work enabling individuals to learn skills and achieve personal development through their volunteering.

The involvement of volunteers will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- Tasks that are performed by volunteers will be clearly defined, so that all everyone is sure of their respective roles and responsibilities
- The organisation will comply with the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations (2018) in the use of data held on all volunteers
- Volunteering opportunities will complement rather than replace the work of paid staff
- Volunteers will be provided with regular opportunities to share ideas/concerns with a named contact
- All existing and future policies will be checked as to how they affect volunteers

What we look for in a volunteer

We aim to recruit volunteers that represent the diverse population of Milton Keynes, with a broad range of experiences, so that we are best able to gather the views and experiences of local people by people that they can best relate to and trust.

The main function of Healthwatch Milton Keynes is to engage with, listen to and record the views and experiences of people accessing health and social care services. To achieve this, there are some key qualities we look for in any volunteer:

- An interest in health and social care, and the experiences of patients, service users, carers and families
- Good communication skills
- Ability to build a good rapport and trust 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)

Recruitment of volunteers

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will adhere to its equalities and diversity policy when recruiting and selecting volunteers. All potential volunteers will be asked to complete a volunteer application form.

Written role descriptions will outline time, commitment, necessary skills, and actual duties. Where there is specific training required this will be highlighted as part of the recruitment process. Where there is a requirement for a Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS) this will be highlighted as part of the recruitment process. All volunteers will be required to provide two references.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes keeps the volunteer application process open.

When advertising volunteer opportunities, we outline:

- Healthwatch Milton Keynes' legislative remit, mission and objectives
- Current opportunities and supporting role descriptions
- What value volunteer can contribute to, and receive in return from the organisation
- How to apply and the recruitment process

Volunteer interviews

HWMK follows a process for selecting volunteers that ensures 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 Healthwatch Milton Keynes and what the organisation 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 required or available.

Written records of interviews are stored on volunteers' personal files.

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.

Managers should refer to the Disclosure and Barring Checks Policy to establish level of check required.

Unsuccessful applicants

If, after completing the recruitment process, Healthwatch Milton Keynes 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 Healthwatch Milton Keynes, 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 can inform future and best practice.

Induction and training

Because every volunteer is different, and the roles vary, Healthwatch Milton Keynes takes a personalised approach to the induction process. We want to ensure that our volunteers value their journey with Healthwatch Milton Keynes, as much as we value their support, so we will tailor induction packages around the person, not the other way around.

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 supervision meetings and opportunities to meet other volunteers

Support and Supervision

Once placed, we will expect volunteers to comply with existing policies and procedures. All volunteers are covered under Healthwatch Milton Keynes Public Liability Insurance.

Volunteers will be asked to sign a volunteer's agreement (appendix 2).

All volunteers will have an induction to their volunteering which will involve an overview of the relevant policies and procedures. Following Induction, volunteers will have regular support and supervision meetings with a named contact to identify areas for development, or to discuss any issues. A record of these discussions will be held as part of the individual volunteer's records. Volunteers can have access to their records at any time.

Volunteers will be able to claim reasonable expenses for their volunteering in line with the Expenses Policy. Volunteers should discuss any planned expenditure prior to incurring these expenses to ensure that it will be covered by the organisation.

Where volunteers have holidays or other commitments which mean that they cannot attend their normal volunteering, they should advise their named contact. If volunteers require a longer break from their volunteering, they should discuss this with their named contact.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will endeavour to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the needs of volunteers. Volunteers can access learning and development opportunities which are relevant to their volunteering role throughout their time with Healthwatch Milton Keynes. Opportunities for Learning and Development will form part of the discussions at support and supervision sessions.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes 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. Volunteers can request one-to-one support at any time, should they have any concerns they want to discuss.

Conduct

All Healthwatch Milton Keynes volunteers are expected to represent the aims and values of Healthwatch Milton Keynes when they are undertaking volunteering with the organisation.

We will ensure that all volunteers are trained in understanding the aims and objectives of HWMK, our remit, 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 Milton Keynes have the challenge of turning people's experiences into a high-quality independent evidence-base that we use to influence change in the health and care system. 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 own personal views.

Where a concern is highlighted – either by a volunteer or about a volunteer, this will be dealt with using the organisation's Disciplinary, Grievance and Dismissal Policy.

Remuneration and Expenses

The policy of HWMK is that volunteers are not remunerated, but we will cover reasonable travel expenses incurred when undertaking activities for the organisation. Details of what can be claimed, and the claims process are to be found in our Expenses Policy.

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 Milton Keynes 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.

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.

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.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy lies with the Chief Executive Officer. Adherence to this policy is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers within the organisation.

Reviews of this policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or as and when changes are required.



Volunteer agreement

Volunteers provide essential support to the delivery of Healthwatch Milton Keynes statutory responsibilities and are a valued part of the Healthwatch Milton Keynes team.

This agreement is a guide to help you, the volunteer, to feel supported and clear about your rights and responsibilities.

Your point of contact for Healthwatch Milton Keynes is Tracy Keech, Deputy CEO.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will:

- Respect your skills, dignity and wishes
- Introduce you to how we work, your role and provide any training you need to carry out your role
- Provide you with regular support and give you the opportunity to feedback to us about your work
- Pay any reasonable travel and out of pocket expenses as agreed by us
- Apply our equal opportunities and complaints procedure if needed
- Provide a safe working environment
- Consult with you and keep you informed of any changes

Healthwatch Milton Keynes ask that you:

- Undertake activities as a volunteer reliably and to the best of your ability, following the rules and procedures we have given you, observing health and safety and confidentiality boundaries
- Offer us your commitment and reliability
- Tell us promptly, with as much advance notice as possible, if you have to cancel any volunteering commitments made

The agreement may be cancelled at any time by either party.

Volunteer	Manager
Name	Name
Date	Date

Signatur	Signature
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GDPR Statement

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will process and be in control of the data and any personal data provided on this form.

The information which you provide in this form and any other information or personal data obtained or provided during the course of your volunteering with us will be used for the purpose of assessing your suitability for roles, in emergency situations e.g. to protect life or in a medical situation, and in relation to legitimate interests of our business which includes contacting you, or emailing you information that provides information about Healthwatch activities and making arrangements with you regarding volunteer opportunities.

If you choose to end your voluntary agreement at any stage, the information will be retained for a period of 6 years after which time it will be destroyed.

You have the right to data portability, request access to, rectification or erasure of your data collected as part of this process.

If your application is successful, the information will form part of your volunteer file and we will be entitled to process it for all purposes in connection with your voluntary role. This includes registering you as a member of Healthwatch Milton Keynes, which will include your data being processed by MailChimp. For more information about how we process personal data, please see our [privacy policy](#).

So that we may use the information for the above purposes and on the above terms, we are required to obtain your explicit consent. Accordingly, please sign the consent section below. You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time and the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner.

I CONSENT TO MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BEING USED FOR THE PURPOSES AND ON THE TERMS SET OUT ABOVE.

Signed:

Date: