

Volunteer Involvement Strategy

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Making a difference together





Contents

What is Healthwatch Hampshire?	3
Importance of volunteering in Healthwatch Hampshire.....	3
The health and social care environment and volunteerism	4
Our vision	5
Purpose of this strategy	6
Our approach.....	6
The Nolan principles of public life	8
Volunteer roles.....	9
Board Members	10
Healthwatch Champions	10
Specialist volunteers	12
Areas for development.....	12
References.....	13
Contact information.....	13



What is Healthwatch Hampshire?



Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as the consumer champion for publicly funded health and social care services. Healthwatch

England works at a national level. Local Healthwatch including Healthwatch Hampshire provides a strong voice for local people by engaging with them to seek views about locally delivered services, to signpost service users to relevant information services and to influence the design of local health and social care provision.

Healthwatch Hampshire is an independent organisation, set up as a community interest company. We enable people to share their views and concerns about their local health and social care services and we use their contribution to build a picture of where services are doing well and where they can be improved. We also support people to make an NHS complaint through our advocacy service. We use volunteers to support and promote our work in order to become the influential and effective voice of the public.

Importance of volunteering in Healthwatch Hampshire

Healthwatch is centred on patients and service users. Key to its success is active participation by the public, whether they're current users of services or not. To function effectively as the local champion for people using health and social care, we need a growing community of local volunteers involved with Healthwatch Hampshire in different ways.

Healthwatch Hampshire appreciates the complex nature of volunteering. We value the fact that people want to give their time, energy and commitment to support our purpose, help us to deliver our ambitions and strengthen our communities. Volunteers play a vital role in developing and adding value to Healthwatch locally, building connections, making Healthwatch Hampshire known in local communities and ensuring our continued success.

Healthwatch Hampshire volunteers:

- advance Healthwatch Hampshire's mission
- act as a conduit for information to and from local people
- build sustainability of our work
- increase diverse perspectives in the organisation
- extend and complement the work of paid staff
- help raise public awareness and stimulate interest in our activities
- help improve services within Healthwatch Hampshire's spheres of power and influence
- increase Healthwatch's credibility



Volunteers help us to provide a flexible and sustainable organisation that learns and adapts to meet policy changes in the NHS and social care.

Volunteers help us to:

- Reassure service users
- Stay relevant to local people
- Demonstrate that the community cares
- Provide a quick route into communities and hard to reach groups
- Establish community ownership, enabling people to influence services and enjoy the benefits
- Influence others to participate
- Measure softer outcomes such as improved wellbeing

The health and social care environment and volunteers

The development of Healthwatch is in the context of the wider changes in the health and social care system. The health and social care reforms of 2012 set a powerful ambition to put people at the centre of health and social care. They made fundamental changes which shifted the way people engage with their communities, potentially recognising the value of volunteering. New links between the NHS and local authorities have led to a renewed focus on co-producing health with communities. Policy makers and NHS professionals are becoming more open to exploring how professionals could work more collaboratively with patients and support patients to be fully involved in their own care. Healthwatch has a major part to play in this cultural shift and in ensuring it is done effectively, by drawing on bottom-up intelligence and using Health and Wellbeing Boards to drive forward the change.

The Department of Health has conducted work in recent years exploring the role of volunteers in health and social care. Its strategic vision for volunteering places volunteering in the government's wider ambitions to decentralise power, reduce reliance on the state and encourage people to take an active role in their communities.

“Our vision is of a society in which social action and reciprocity are the norm and where volunteering is encouraged, promoted and supported because it has the power to enhance quality, reduce inequality or improve outcomes in health, public health and social care.”
(Department of Health 2011b, p6)¹

The NHS five year forward² view talks about harnessing the 'renewable energy represented by patients and communities' and the need to 'engage with communities and citizens in new ways, involving them directly in decisions about the future of health and care services.'



Not only is the health and social care environment changing but so is the nature and demographic of volunteering. Formal volunteering is in decline and social action, micro-volunteering, co-production and 'virtual' volunteering are on the rise as people are working longer and their motivations for volunteering are changing. As government and society's approach to health and care evolves, we need to re-imagine the role of the volunteer.

The Kings Fund report "Volunteering in Health and Care: Securing a Sustainable Future" (2013) ³ estimated that around three million people volunteer regularly across health and care, roughly the same number as in the total health and care workforce, highlighting the fact that volunteering is an important resource in the health and social care economy. However volunteerism involves much more than working without pay: it involves people making choices to do things to help society in ways that go beyond their basic obligations, and benefit by learning new things and feeling needed.

The Health & Social Care Act explicitly requires local Healthwatch to be representative of the different users of services in the way in which it exercises its functions. It should be inclusive and reflect the diversity of the community. Healthwatch Hampshire aims to establish a climate in which volunteering can adapt and flourish, developing creative ways to engage with volunteers from different Hampshire communities whose experiences can be used to influence local planning and commissioning.

Our Vision

Healthwatch Hampshire's vision is to realise the value of volunteering in our work and the benefits of patient participation across all public health and social care services so that:

- volunteers' capabilities and capacity are best utilised to support our work
- volunteering is celebrated and patient participation strengthened
- we see improved quality, equity and outcomes in health and social care services
- volunteering and its benefits are promoted broadly within local communities to build connections and ensure our continued success through representation
- volunteers get the most out of their experience

We will achieve this by increasing volunteer involvement in our work, developing volunteer roles, growing our network of diverse volunteers and building a culture of collaboration with our volunteers. Healthwatch has a significant role to play in providing opportunities for volunteers to influence the strategic direction of their local NHS and social care services, working together to have the best health and social care services in Hampshire by engaging people and communities in shaping services according to local needs and experience.



Purpose of this strategy

The aim underpinning this strategy is:

To maximize the contribution of volunteers' skills, knowledge, experiences and efforts to help achieve the greatest possible impact towards Healthwatch Hampshire's strategic objectives.

The purpose of this strategy is to support Healthwatch Hampshire's business plan and to establish organisational expectations of engagement of volunteers in our operations.

This strategy highlights how volunteering is central to our future plans and how in delivering on our aims we will connect more closely with our volunteers to increase the level and improve the nature of volunteer involvement.

The five key objectives for the Volunteer Strategy are:

1. **Recognising the value and promoting the benefits of volunteering for Healthwatch Hampshire**
2. **Growing and enhancing accessibility and diversity among our volunteers**
3. **Improving the volunteer experience**
4. **Supporting and strengthening the Healthwatch Hampshire infrastructure**
5. **Improving community wellbeing**

Our approach

Volunteering is central to the ethos of Healthwatch Hampshire and an essential element in improving and sustaining individual and community wellbeing, by encouraging individual capacity building whilst simultaneously addressing community social problems.

Volunteers are crucial to the success of Healthwatch Hampshire and volunteering is key. The Healthwatch Hampshire volunteer strategy builds our organisational capacity by developing high impact, meaningful volunteer opportunities which create greater influence and outcomes for Healthwatch Hampshire.

Through the roles of our volunteers we aim to drive up the quality of local services, making Hampshire a better place for all of us to live in, helping people connect with each other and with others in our community; resulting in improved experience and outcomes for people who use services.

We will reach out to more people to increase our diverse network of dynamic volunteers who work in support of our mission. We will facilitate communication, share knowledge, identify opportunities for action and channel resources towards strategic work.



Volunteer engagement with Healthwatch Hampshire:

- builds our capacity beyond what staff alone can accomplish
- provides access to groups we wouldn't normally get to
- gathers information we wouldn't hear
- focusses on matching the organisation's needs to the skills and talents that volunteers want to share
- is a collaboration between staff and volunteers for an intended and measurable result
- includes organisational wide accountability for the results of volunteer effort
- integrates flexibility and choice into all aspects of volunteer engagement
- allocates resources to dedicated volunteer engagement

In conjunction with this strategy, the Volunteer Policy provides a quality framework that defines and supports volunteer involvement, including recruitment, development and recognition for our growing Healthwatch community. Good practice procedures are being developed in support of the policy confirming the partnership between Healthwatch Hampshire and its volunteers, helping to give volunteers a meaningful and enjoyable experience which in turn enables people to have a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided locally.

Healthwatch Hampshire's work and values are underpinned by the Nolan Principles of public life. When representing Healthwatch Hampshire volunteers should uphold/adhere to these principles.





The Nolan principles of public life



Selflessness - act solely in terms of the public interest



Integrity - avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships



Objectivity - volunteers must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias



Accountability - be accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this



Openness - act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so



Honesty - be truthful



Leadership - exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs





Volunteer roles

There are a number of opportunities at many levels for members of the public to be involved in developing Healthwatch and supporting it to meet its aims, from the casual and informal to the highly formal and structured.



Healthwatch Hampshire has an inclusive and flexible system of volunteering which encourages, enables and supports volunteers to undertake volunteer activity in a range of health and social care environments in meaningful ways that reflect the abilities, needs and backgrounds of the volunteer and of Healthwatch.

Volunteers come to the organisation with different experiences, expectations and motivations as well as different levels of commitment with respect to availability, time etc. Volunteering is a matter of free choice and there is no compulsion to take part.

We acknowledge that Healthwatch volunteers have other interests, whether as patient representatives or personal interests which may cause a conflict with their volunteering for Healthwatch Hampshire. It is important to distinguish and explore how volunteers identify their role and see themselves as part of Healthwatch, to be clear on whose view is being expressed in a given situation, and to maintain professional boundaries.

Volunteer assignments can involve working directly with staff, other volunteers or alone. Each requires differing levels of skills and responsibilities. Volunteers need to have clear understanding of their role. Typical volunteer assignments include:

- covering Healthwatch Hampshire events and stands
- social media support
- help in conducting and identifying research projects
- marketing and publicity support
- admin support

In many of these roles, volunteers will be two way communicators:

- promoting Healthwatch in their local communities so that people know what our role is and how to contact us
- being the eyes and ears on the ground in local communities, feeding back people's experiences (good and bad) of services and/or encouraging individuals to tell us their experiences directly.

*DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service criminal records check, formerly CRB.



1. Board members

Board Members are required to act as specified in the governing documents of Healthwatch Hampshire. All members take equal and shared responsibility for the organisation's work as a whole and act collectively in making decisions and ensuring that those decisions are implemented. The duty of each board member is to contribute to the good performance of the board and leadership of the organisation in accordance with the agreed responsibilities of the Board. These positions are advertised on the Healthwatch website when available.

Desired skills:

- Commitment to the aims, objectives and values of Healthwatch
- Strategic vision & independent judgement
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of directorship
- Ability to bring specific needed skills, experience or perspective to the board
- Ability to work collaboratively with other Board members and Healthwatch staff

2. Healthwatch Champions

Being a Champion is an opportunity for people of all ages, background, disabilities and gender to get involved in shaping services and help make the community a healthier place to live.

The Champions Network helps Healthwatch Hampshire to distribute information about Healthwatch activities and to collect information about issues in the local area to feed back to the staff team. Champions may be members of existing forums and groups who advocate on behalf of the organisation. They may be part of one or more groups. Champions liaise regularly with Healthwatch staff and the Volunteer Officer to ensure they have the most up-to-date information from the organisation.

Healthwatch Hampshire aims to recruit and support a large number of Champions across Hampshire in all sectors of society. It is especially important that Healthwatch collects information from those representing 'seldom heard' groups and communities that may not engage as often with patient and public involvement services. Champions' role includes giving Healthwatch a presence in the community and collecting issues that the public raise about local services.



The role of a Healthwatch Champion

- Listen to people's stories
- Gather good local intelligence and evidence
- Feed information they gather back to the staff team
- Reach out and connect to a diverse range of local people and communities
- Encourage people to feed back their experiences and stories about health and social care services to Healthwatch Hampshire
- Encourage local people to participate in Healthwatch activities in their community, help develop new activities and identify local events
- Provide information to the Healthwatch Hampshire team about health, social care and wellbeing activities in their local area
- Support and assist local people to raise their level of wellbeing by providing information and referring them to the Healthwatch Hampshire 'Gateway' helpline or to a Citizens Advice, which provides signposting for further support and an NHS complaints advocacy service

Interests, skills and aptitude required of a Healthwatch Champion

- A passion to make a difference to the lives of people in their community now and in the future
- Enthusiasm, commitment, a willingness to learn and ability to communicate
- Committed to promoting equality and appreciating diversity
- Knowledge of health/social care structure locally
- Able to advocate on behalf of Healthwatch and explain its function
- Flexibility in attending events/promotional work, including evenings and weekends when required
- Confident in creating dialogue with members of the public
- Networking with partner organisations and staff
- A member of at least one local health or social care group /organisation or interest in joining a group





3. Specialist volunteers

These are required to conduct specific duties where they have expertise or have undertaken specialist training. These roles extend across the range of Healthwatch work and include collating information, distributing information to other networks, being part of Healthwatch projects/research and responding to issues raised by the public. Each volunteer reports his or her progress to the Volunteers Officer.

Desired skills depend on the specific role, but may include (for example):

- Knowledge of health/social care structure locally
- Commitment to improving services
- Willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to projects
- Ability to think creatively
- Ability to research information
- Networking with partner organisations and staff
- Ability to work effectively as a member of a team

Areas for development

- Developing leadership amongst a core group of volunteers to support volunteer groups
- Building the capacity of volunteers to communicate and do outreach about Healthwatch Hampshire's work and build the organisational profile eg patient participation groups
- Increasing our capacity to engage specialised volunteers and develop new volunteering roles in support of specific priorities eg Enter and View
- Enhancing and refining Healthwatch Hampshire systems for coordinating volunteers, including recruitment, induction, support and recognition.

The opening sentence of the NHS constitution states that 'the NHS belongs to the people'. Hampshire Healthwatch will work with our partners, acknowledging and utilising their experience in using volunteers to make this statement a reality and something to be recognised and celebrated. Volunteering is a high value activity and a means of improving quality, and volunteers as an important part of the workforce.



References

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Please note: This document is under constant review and therefore subject to change

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