

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Volunteer Handbook

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Our Vision is to be a strong, independent, trusted and effective voice to champion the views of local people.

Our Mission is to ensure the best possible quality and choice in health, social care and wellbeing services for the benefit of all living in Stockton-on-Tees.

Our aim is to influence improvement in health and social care by reaching as many people as possible and allowing the opportunity for service user voices to be heard.

Hello and Welcome

We are delighted that you have chosen to join us as a volunteer. Volunteers are central to our work, enabling us to be as effective as possible in supporting people to have their voices heard and improve health and social care services. The aim of this handbook is to give you some background into Healthwatch, who we are and what we do, together with an understanding of the various roles, activities and responsibilities of our Volunteers.

There is also 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 in meeting our legal responsibilities and ensuring Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees provides a consistently high level of support to those in our communities who use health and care services now and in the future.

This handbook will act as a handy reference guide to give you help and support in your volunteering role with Healthwatch. You have a unique role to play and we look forward to getting to know you.

About Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees has its own legal powers and sets its own work programme to reflect the concerns of the local community. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved; we then share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also share them with Healthwatch England, the national body, to help improve the quality of services across the country. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary - Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is here to:

- Help people find out about local health and social care services.
- Listen to what people think of services.
- Help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care.

We are here to give adults, young people and children a powerful voice to make sure their views and experiences are captured and heard by those who plan, design and deliver health and social care services. We will do this by engaging with people who use the services; patients, carers and the public. We want to be inclusive of our residents and welcome volunteers from all ethnicities, genders,

sexual orientations, socio-economic classes, religions, disabilities, education levels and people with English as a second language.

As a volunteer your role is to help build strong links with the community, promoting our activities and becoming positive ambassadors. Giving your time, skills and support will enable people from Stockton-on-Tees to have a strong voice to help shape and improve health and care services, now and long into the future.

Our approach to being an effective Healthwatch is underpinned by the following principles:

- Build strong links with local voluntary and community groups.
- Work with established community networks to share information and find out what matters to people.
- Work collaboratively with local partners who have strong local knowledge and connectivity with communities and can support the work of Healthwatch in obtaining the views of these communities.
- Build a bank of trained Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Volunteers who can be the eyes and ears of Healthwatch at a grass root level.
- Champion the voices of those who are seldom-heard.
- Establish an inclusive membership network to share information and circulate regular e-bulletins.

The work we do is jointly commissioned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council; we have a statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board, the body that oversees health and social care in the area and have the power to influence commissioning decisions.

We have statutory powers to ‘Enter and View’ health and social care services using our trained volunteers who are our ‘Authorised Representatives’. We also have a right to request information from service providers and to receive a response within 20 days.

Services and Areas We Cover

Anywhere the people of Stockton-on-Tees access publicly funded health and social care services, such as;

- A&E departments
- Ambulance services
- Dentists
- Doctors
- Medical centres
- Hospitals

- Midwifery
- NHS consultants
- Occupational Therapists
- Opticians
- Pharmacy
- Specialist health care
- Specialist health services
- Domiciliary care
- Equipment services
- Residential/nursing care homes and day care centres
- Other statutory provided services
- Specialised care and services
- Support for carers
- Hospital transport
- Social Care Services

We listen to:

- Anyone living in Stockton-on-Tees who would like to give their feedback and view of health and social care services.

Our work can be broken down into four key areas. These are:

‘Voice’	Ensuring local peoples’ voices are heard and their experiences can influence the design, commissioning and delivery of local health and social care services.
Scrutiny and Accountability	Holding those who plan and commission local services to account through our involvement in the Health and Well Being Board, our reports and recommendations, our power to enter and view services and our ability to refer issues of major concern direct to Healthwatch England or the local Health Scrutiny committee.
Information and Signposting	Providing an Information and Signposting service to provide information about local health and social care services to help people make informed choices about what’s best for them.
Complaints	Providing information and signposting to people wishing to make a complaint about health and care services.

But...

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees does not investigate individual complaints or act on behalf of individuals with complaints services.

Volunteering Opportunities

Healthwatch Champion

As a Healthwatch Champion you will get the chance to be the eyes and ears of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees by helping to support a range of different engagement activities. These activities are carried out across the locality and will help to gather the views of local people who tell us what matters to them when it comes to health and social care services.

Our volunteers take part in activities such as:

- Distributing Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees information and promoting Healthwatch events and activities to local people.
- Engaging and consulting with people in the local community to discover their views and experience of health and social care services.
- Signpost local people to the Information and Signposting service.

This is a great opportunity to fill in some spare time, gain some new skills and make a valuable difference.

Healthwatch Enter and View Authorised Representative

We have an important statutory (legal) power that entitles Authorised Representatives to enter and observe health and social care services as they are being provided. It provides an opportunity for us to see and hear how people experience a service and to collect their views and those of their relatives and carers.

Enter and View powers apply to health services for both adults and children and social care services for adults. Generally, they would not include looking at services provided in people's homes unless by specific invitation.

Enter and View visits are not inspections, they are visits conducted by trained, Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees who will offer a lay person's perspective and will report back their findings to their local Healthwatch.

Being a member of the Enter and View team is an important, sensitive and complex role that will bring you into direct contact with patients, residents, carers, service users, staff and members of the public. You will usually visit health and social care providers' premises within your local area and you will always have the option of choosing not to visit.

You may be asked not to undertake a visit if there is a potential conflict of interest for example if you are related to a patient, resident or member of staff. You must also be willing to have your name published on our list of Authorised Enter and View Representatives.

Activities you could get involved with;

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Promotion and Engagement

Help promote the work of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees to all residents throughout Stockton, taking leaflets, posters and work plan surveys to public places, while gathering information from service users that can influence our work plan priorities. You can support us with our promotional events which take place across the Stockton area, holding stalls and drop in sessions.

Enter and View Investigations

You can support us with our Enter and View work plan, attending health and social care services to gain an understanding of peoples' experiences whilst they are receiving care and support. Responding to concerns received from the public regarding services, creating a report on the findings and working with service providers to develop and improve services.

Support the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees on-line Membership

Become part of our on-line Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Membership - encouraging other people to sign up as members and share opinions from the perspective of the community groups that they are involved with, regarding health and social care.

Facilitate at Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Events

Help to support us when delivering Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees events, gathering information from attendees or support with the organisation and planning.

Meet the team

Staff members	
Natasha Judge	Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Project Lead
Geoff Newton	Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Coordinator
Jennie Metcalfe	Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Engagement & Intelligence Officer
Kathryn Clapham	Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Project Administration Officer



A Summary of Our Policies

Health & Safety Policy

We are committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and service users, and regularly assess the risks associated with our work. All of our activities are carried out with your health and safety in mind; you will be given appropriate instructions for all activities. All our staff are informed of their responsibilities to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to ensure the safety, health and welfare of those we work with.

It is important that volunteers understand and accept personal responsibility for promoting and maintaining health and safety. This means:

- Carrying out your role without endangering your own health and safety or that of others.
- Complying with all relevant instructions, procedures and guidance relating to safety.
- Informing Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees staff members of any personal health and safety requirements that you have.
- Letting us know of any concerns or doubts you have about health and safety.

Safeguarding Adults & Children

A vulnerable adult is someone who is aged 18 years or over who 'is or may be in need of Community Care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness' and 'is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.'

The definition is broad and includes but is not restricted to: -

- Adults with physical disabilities
- Adults with learning disabilities/difficulties
- Adults with mental health difficulties
- Adults with a drug or alcohol addiction
- Homeless adults

Any concern that a vulnerable adult or child/young person under the age of 18 may be suffering significant harm should be discussed with the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees manager or staff member as soon as the concerns arise. They will make a decision regarding breaching confidentiality and taking the issue further.

If someone discloses abuse to you:

- Stay calm, listen carefully rather than question and be sympathetic.
- Be aware that medical and criminal evidence may need to be preserved so do not attempt to remove torn or soiled clothing etc.
- Report the disclosure to the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees manager or staff member as soon as possible.
- Write down what was said as soon as possible and who you reported it to.

Tell the person that you will take their disclosure seriously. What happened wasn't their fault and that you have to tell an appropriate member of staff or manager. You cannot keep the information to yourself if you think they or someone else is at risk.

Do not:

- Put yourself at risk.
- Contact the alleged perpetrator.

Equal Opportunities Policy

We are committed to making sure everyone is welcome, being a Healthwatch volunteer means:

- Contributing your time and support equally and without discrimination
- Valuing and supporting the principles of equality
- Recognising if there are any gaps in your knowledge and understanding of differences and being open to the development of this understanding.
- Considering what may offend others.
- Not making judgements
- Being aware that difference isn't always obvious or visible.
- No person is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of:
 - Sex (gender)
 - Sexuality
 - Gender reassignment
 - Race, colour, ethnic or national origin
 - Disability
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Because they are married (including civil partnerships)
 - Because they have complained of discrimination
 - Religion or belief
 - Offending background

Confidentiality

You may hear or see things which are private and confidential both by the service providers and from patients, carers and members of the public. We will support you to understand the importance of confidentiality and understand legal requirements surrounding data protection and confidentiality. You will be asked to sign our data protection and confidentiality protocol following your training.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

This code applies to all Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees volunteers. It sets out what is expected of volunteers and what their responsibilities will be; our aim is to create a positive environment within which all members can contribute freely, equally and openly.

We expect our volunteers to:

- Act and conduct themselves in a reasonable and responsible way to any staff, volunteers or members of the public they work with or meet as a Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees volunteer.
- Comply with the relevant legislation and Healthwatch policies including Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, Data Protection and Confidentiality.
- Value diversity by treating all people with respect and acting in a way that does not discriminate against or exclude anyone.
- Never disclose confidential and sensitive information unless there is a legal duty to do so - for example, in the interests of safeguarding, advice and training can be given in this regard.
- Always act in an open and honest way.
- Not accept gifts or hospitality. This could be seen as trying to influence the decisions, independence or activities of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.
- Inform Healthwatch staff of any conflict of interest or anything that might be seen by other people as a conflict of interest as soon as it arises.
- Inform Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees of any changes to employment or personal circumstances that could affect participation in Healthwatch activities.
- To not share personal experiences or make any personal judgements to any member of the public.

Volunteers working at Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will be required to:

- Develop a good understanding of the work of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.
- Listen to and respect the views and experiences of other Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees volunteers.
- Only carry out activities coordinated and agreed by the staff of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.
- Observe the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Volunteer Agreement when acting on behalf of Healthwatch.
- Where appropriate to the role, volunteers will be required to submit to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Non-disclosure of an offence prior to submission will cause automatic disqualification from Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees unless it is demonstrated that an error has occurred.
- Declaration of an offence prior to a DBS check will not necessarily exclude someone from becoming a volunteer. The Pioneering Care Partnership Senior Management Team will consider each individual circumstance.
- Always act as a positive ambassador for Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.

What you can expect from us:

We want to ensure you enjoy your role and get the most out of it, we will:

- Treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation.
- Ensure you have a clear idea of your responsibilities.
- Arrange training and support through regular meetings or discussions. The format of these will be dependent on your role and specific Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees work plan items.
- Offer you fair, honest and timely feedback on your volunteering role.
- Keep you informed about how your work contributes to Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.
- Listen to your views on how we can improve the volunteering experience at Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.

Questions and Concerns

Trial Period

All volunteer roles are offered subject to a trial period of three months, this provides an opportunity for both parties to assess suitability of the placement.

Training

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees want to ensure you are confident to carry out your role. Most training will be while carrying out Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees duties, with key skills and tasks described and/or demonstrated. Bespoke training will be offered for specific duties as required, together with standard training that includes Equality and Diversity, Confidentiality, Health & Safety and Safeguarding.

Support

Every volunteer will have the support of the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees staff team, to enable regular discussions regarding their volunteering role, to raise any issues or concerns and to celebrate successes.

Expenses

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will pay reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to prior approval by a Healthwatch staff member. Submission of valid receipts and claim forms will be required.

Problems with your role

If you encounter any difficulty with any aspect of your role, please talk to the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees staff team or Project Lead as soon as possible for advice and support.

If the role isn't working out as hoped, the first step is to work together to try and overcome any difficulties. Healthwatch will endeavour to support you into a role that may be more suitable.

Complaints, comments and concerns

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will respond to any complaints, comments and concerns in a timely and consistent way. Complaints, comments and concerns should be raised initially a Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees staff member, with escalation to the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Project Lead if problems cannot be resolved.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees welcomes any feedback or suggestions as to how the service can be improved.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk
healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net
Telephone 0808 172 9559

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

This agreement is intended to assure you of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees appreciation of your services and to indicate our commitment to do the very best we can to make your volunteer experience here a productive and rewarding one.

The Organisation

We, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees agree to accept the services of

Name _____ (Volunteer)

Date _____

and commit to the following:

1. To provide adequate information, training and support to the volunteer, enabling them to be able to meet the responsibilities of their volunteer role outline.
2. To respect the skills, dignity and individual needs of the volunteer and to do our best to adjust to these individual requirements.
3. To be receptive to comments from the volunteer regarding ways in which we might mutually better accomplish our respective tasks.
4. To treat the volunteer as an equal partner with the organisation's staff, jointly responsible for completion of the organisation's goals and the fulfilment of its mission.

The Volunteer

I agree to serve as a volunteer and commit to the following:

1. To perform my volunteer role description to the best of my ability.
2. To adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures, including record-keeping requirements and confidentiality of organisation and client information.
3. To meet time and duty commitments, except in exceptional circumstances, or to provide adequate notice so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Signed:

On behalf of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees:

Volunteer:

.....

.....

Date.....

Date.....

This agreement is not a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

Neither of us intend any employment relationship to be created, either now or at any time in the future.