

# Code of Conduct

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January 2022

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## Policy statement

This code of conduct sets out the expectations Healthwatch Cornwall has of all those who work or carry out activities for it, in a voluntary or paid capacity, including Directors, employees, students and volunteers. For ease of reference, these parties will be called representatives throughout the rest of the document.

The title of Volunteer Development Officer used in this document refers to the named contact in Healthwatch Cornwall who supports our team of volunteers.

Everyone who represents Healthwatch Cornwall is expected to behave professionally and in support of our values outlined below.

## Our values

- Competency
- Sustainability
- Accountability
- Inclusion
- Independence
- Collaboration
- Credibility

All representatives work to the 7 Nolan principles as referenced in HC's **Conflicts of Interest Policy** and **Decision Making Policy & Procedures**

## Compliance with law

All those who represent Healthwatch Cornwall are required to abide by relevant laws and regulations, including those relating to the environment, health and safety, discrimination, disability and employment. Representatives will be ethical and responsible whenever dealing with company finances, the services we deliver, partnership and collaborative working and public image. Representatives will inform the Healthwatch Cornwall Chair or CEO immediately of any possible or actual infringement.



## Conflict of interest

Representatives are expected to maintain professional boundaries in their relationships with each other, and external parties such as commissioners and providers. Full details can be found in our **Conflict of Interest policy**.

## Serving the public

Representatives will always perform their duties to the highest standard and treat members of the public with dignity and respect, taking account of their individual needs. Representatives will actively promote equality, diversity and social inclusion and encourage all the community to participate in engagement activities.

Representatives will be honest and impartial when conducting Healthwatch activity, regardless of personal views and will discuss any conflict with the appropriate line manager or Volunteer Development Officer. Healthwatch Cornwall is a politically neutral and independent organisation.

## Use of public funds

Representatives of Healthwatch Cornwall have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public money and proper care of assets which have been publicly funded.

Representatives will carry out these obligations responsibly and take appropriate measures to ensure that Healthwatch Cornwall uses resources efficiently, economically and effectively, avoiding waste and extravagance.

## Respect in the workplace

Our aim is to create a positive environment within which individuals and organisations with an interest in our work can contribute freely, equally and openly. Use of technology for virtual meetings and events will also be regarded as 'the workplace'. We will not allow any kind of discriminatory behaviour, harassment or victimisation.

## Representing Healthwatch Cornwall

Staff and volunteers including board members are accountable to the public for their actions and the way they carry out their responsibilities. They should always behave in a manner which does not bring Healthwatch Cornwall into disrepute or damage our relationship with the public, service providers or other stakeholders. Representatives must be respectful and offer constructive criticism which does not seek to undermine an individual.

Where representatives of Healthwatch Cornwall attend meetings whether in person or virtual means, they will provide feedback in a timely and structured manner.

When speaking on behalf of Healthwatch Cornwall, representatives will reflect the priorities and policies of Healthwatch Cornwall, even if they differ from personal views. If they are there in a personal capacity or a capacity connected with



another role they undertake, they should always be explicit if they are expressing their own personal views.

Approaches to representatives by third parties for views, including contact with the media must be referred to the Communication & Campaigns Manager. In respect of media communications, the CEO will be the official spokesperson of Healthwatch Cornwall unless delegated to the Communication & Campaigns Manager, and no other representatives should commit to media interviews without first consulting and gaining the approval of the CEO.

All staff and volunteers must be politically impartial in their public role. Healthwatch Cornwall will sometimes initiate or participate in campaigning about an issue. Care must be taken to ensure that, in doing so, the principle of political neutrality is always maintained and that nothing is done that could be interpreted as partisan in nature or suggests support for a specific party-political view.

### **Duty of confidentiality**

Healthwatch Cornwall will sometimes receive information which is not in the public domain, often relating to individuals, organisations or financial matters. Representatives of Healthwatch Cornwall will respect confidentiality and not divulge third party information without the agreement of the third party, or a legal requirement to do so, and operate according to our **Confidentiality policy**.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

We are committed to understanding, accepting and appreciating individual difference as outlined in our **Inclusion Statement**. We 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, in accordance with our **Equality and Diversity policy**.

### **Gifts and hospitality**

It is not normally acceptable for representatives of Healthwatch Cornwall to accept a gift, reward or favour from others for work done in an official capacity. This does not include gifts of minor value such as pens or calendars.

### **Alcohol, substance misuse and smoking**

Smoking is not permitted on Healthwatch Cornwall premises, or within the premises where Healthwatch Cornwall work is being undertaken.

Consumption of alcohol is not permitted during working hours. Representatives of Healthwatch Cornwall must not be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours.



## Dress code

All representatives of Healthwatch Cornwall should dress appropriately for their Healthwatch Cornwall role and the context in which they carry it out and in a way that inspires confidence in a professional service.

## Reporting misconduct

Members of the public who wish to report a breach in our code of conduct can raise the concern directly through the communication channels as detailed on our website. Alternatively, if it is more appropriate, they can raise a complaint in accordance with our **Complaints policy** which is also available on our website, and upon request from any member of our team.

We take our Code of Conduct seriously and expect the same of our employees and volunteers.

## Failure to comply

Breaches of our code of conduct will be treated consistently and fairly by the Healthwatch Cornwall CEO and Board of Directors.

Failure to comply with the principles and underlying policies in this document may result in disciplinary action for paid employees which can include termination of employment, or commencing the problem-solving process for volunteers, which can include termination of the volunteer agreement and relationship.

## Data protection

Any personal information provided in connection with this policy will be processed in accordance with data protection principles and will only be processed to ensure that individuals act in the best interests of Healthwatch Cornwall. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

## Review of policy document

The Board of Healthwatch Cornwall will review the effectiveness of the code of conduct policy set out in this document every two years.

This is a controlled document. It should not be altered in any way without the express permission of the author or their representative. On receipt of a new version, please destroy all previous versions.

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