

Agenda Item: 5.2	
Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin Board Meeting	
Date of meeting:	06 July 2016
Title:	Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Author:	Jane Chaplin
For Decision	
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
Financial Implications:	None specifically
Equality and Diversity:	None specifically
Public Engagement:	None specifically
Legal Impact:	None specifically
Recommendations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members are recommended to adopt this policy</li> </ul>
Is there a need to consider inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register?	No

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### Procedures and Guidelines

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#### Background

This policy aims to outline Healthwatch's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and equal treatment for all staff, volunteers and board members in terms of employment and access to services and to provide guidance on anti-discriminatory practice. This policy is non-contractual. This policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis and amended in line with new developments in Equality and Diversity best practice.

Healthwatch's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice relates to any type of discrimination, as set out in the glossary at the end of this document.

#### Legal Framework

Healthwatch shall act in accordance with the following legislation:

- Equalities Act 2010

#### Policy

The policy applies to employees directly employed by Healthwatch, to workers employed via agencies, contractors in terms of employment, directors, volunteers, service users and the general public in terms of service provision. The policy applies specifically to discrimination and equality of opportunity in respect of 'protected characteristics' as defined in the Equalities Act 2010.

- (a) Age
- (b) Disability
- (c) Race
- (d) Sex
- (e) Religion or cultural beliefs
- (f) Gender reassignment
- (g) Marital status and civil partnership
- (h) Sexual orientation
- (i) Pregnancy and maternity

#### Responsibilities

Healthwatch values its staff and volunteers and expects them to be treated in a respectful manner. Accordingly, everyone has a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The Healthwatch Chief Executive is responsible for providing advice and guidance on equality and diversity issues, and to ensure the Policy document is kept up to date.

## **Aims**

Healthwatch is committed to valuing diversity and working with equality as a core value, Healthwatch aims to:

- Promote equality of opportunity.
- Celebrate and value diversity.
- Eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination.

Healthwatch will provide equality of opportunity and equal treatment as an integral part of good practice. The organisation is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised. It will support staff, volunteers and members in not tolerating any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other organisations or clients.

## **General Purpose**

Healthwatch's practices will ensure that staff, volunteers, service users and the general public will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, race, sex, religion or cultural beliefs, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity.

## **Procedure**

### **1. Employment Practices**

Healthwatch aims to promote equality and diversity as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant, volunteer applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable in the context of the policy.

Selection, recruitment, training, promotion and employment practices will be subject to regular review to ensure that they comply with the Diversity and Equalities Policy. All training opportunities will be published widely to all appropriate employees and not in such a way so as to exclude particular groups.

Healthwatch regards discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of staff, volunteers, clients or others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct.

### **2. Healthwatch as a Service Provider**

In developing its services and publicity materials, Healthwatch will seek to ensure that access is equitable for all. This will include, wherever practicable, making specific access arrangements for people with disabilities or learning difficulties, or any other protected characteristic which may apply, such as religion and belief. Healthwatch will attempt to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual.

### 3. Our Aims

Healthwatch fully supports the principle of equality and diversity. It aims to encourage, value and manage diversity and recognises that talent and potential are distributed across the population. Not only are there moral and social reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, it is in the best interest of this organisation to recruit and develop the best people for our jobs from as wide and diverse a pool of talent as possible.

Healthwatch recognises that certain groups and individuals in society are oppressed and disadvantaged due to discrimination directed against them. In all its work Healthwatch will work to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

When listening to communities and individuals Healthwatch will make every effort to understand the context in which people live their lives. Where understanding is more difficult Healthwatch staff and volunteers will be supported in respectfully seeking information.

Those people experiencing discrimination may experience particular issues when accessing health and social care services. When working with partner organisations Healthwatch will be aware of discriminatory practice and how this may manifest itself. Staff and volunteers will be supported in bringing any issues to the attention of partner organisations. Whenever practical and possible Healthwatch will support public sector organisations in undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.

Discrimination operates through commonly held assumptions and prejudices, which are reinforced by laws, rules and customs. This makes discrimination appear normal and inevitable. Discrimination works by stereotyping people into different roles, by treating some people worse than others, or simply by ignoring them.

All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not. Staff and volunteers have a duty to co-operate with Healthwatch to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Employees and volunteers should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts, practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

Healthwatch recognises that the promotion of equal opportunities requires more than passive opposition to discrimination; it is therefore committed to taking positive action towards equality of opportunity, recognising that the limited resources and the operational needs of the organisation may impose justifiable restrictions upon our ability to take such action.

#### 4. Complaints

Healthwatch will treat seriously any complaints of unlawful discrimination on any of the stated grounds made by employees, volunteers, clients or third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints made by external parties will be investigated in accordance with Healthwatch's Complaints Procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

In the event of an investigation concerning a complaint against an employee, the Grievance Policy and Procedures will be followed and any action necessary dealt with under Disciplinary Procedure.

Complaints will be reviewed annually by the Board.

This plan will be reviewed annually.

Date approved by the Board of Directors : \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by the Chair: .....

Date: .....