**Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin**

**Code of Conduct Policy**

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# Background

It is the responsibility of all those involved in Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin (HWT&W) to uphold this Code of Conduct. Adherence to this Code is a condition of involvement in HWT&W and breaches of this Code may lead to sanctions.

# Policy

The Code of Conduct applies to all HWT&W volunteers and contractors, irrespective of status or type of membership. The Code of Conduct applies to all methods of communication including verbal, electronic, written and body language. Volunteers are required to agree to the code of conduct during the Volunteer induction process, and Board Directors further required to commit to the Nolan Principles of Public Life (refer to appendix).

HWT&W employee policies that are concerned with conduct are contained within the HWTW Employee Handbook, and compliance and related items are part of an employee’s contract of employment.

## Key Principles of the Code of Conduct

In joining HWT&W, individuals agree to uphold the following principles and behaviours reflecting the Nolan Principles of Public Life:

* **Respect:** Respect the reputation of HWT&W and treat fellow volunteers and other people that their Healthwatch role brings them into contact, with respect and courtesy.
* **Openness and accountability:** Be fair and open in all dealings and be accountable for their own decisions and actions.
* **Honesty:** Act honestly and withdraw from involvement in any business of HWT&W where they have a conflict of interest or where they could benefit financially or preferentially.
* **Best interests and objectivity:** Act only in the best interests of HWT&W, promoting public confidence and taking decisions on merit and in the public interest.
* **Integrity:** Not place themselves under any obligation, financial or otherwise to a person or organisation that may influence their decisions or actions.
* **Leadership:** Take responsibility for promoting and exemplifying these principles and lead by example in order to maintain and strengthen the public’s trust and confidence in the integrity of the Healthwatch in conducting public business.

## Equality and Diversity

HWT&W places great emphasis on understanding, acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. HWT&W volunteers will treat everyone they are in contact with in their Healthwatch activities with dignity and respect recognizing the value of each individual and their experience. HWT&W expects volunteers to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors which support this position and will not tolerate discrimination by Healthwatch volunteers or staff arising from (but not limited to) employment status, ill health, social exclusion, ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, sexuality and religion. HWT&W seeks to listen to the views of patients, carers and the public, and will seek and listen to those individuals and groups whose voices are seldom heard. HWT&W has a separate Equality and Diversity Policy which should be followed.

## Confidentiality

HWT&W volunteers and contractors and staff will respect all confidences they are party to as a member of Healthwatch and will not disclose confidential and sensitive information unless there is a legal duty to do so (for example in the interests of patient/service user safety).

## Legislation and Policies

Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin volunteers will comply with relevant legislation including equal opportunities, discrimination, human rights, modern slavery (slavery and human trafficking), Healthwatch regulation, data protection and freedom of information and will not disregard Healthwatch policies and procedures.

## Representing HWT&W

Anyone representing HWT&W, including when in contact with the media, will first be authorised by the Healthwatch Board. Acceptance of a ‘representation role’ for HWT&W includes an obligation to represent the best interests of our Healthwatch, and the wider community and to provide feedback on request. When speaking on behalf of the Healthwatch, comments will reflect the Healthwatch priorities, policies and any stated position, even when these differ from any personal views.

## Personal Conduct in Participation in HWT&W Activities

Volunteers will:

* Attend induction training and other training opportunities to develop an appropriate understanding of Healthwatch work.
* Make sure that they have read and understood Healthwatch policies and procedures, and will follow guidance given by staff.
* Inform staff of any changes to employment or personal circumstances which could affect their involvement in Healthwatch
* Declare any conflict of interest as soon as it arises, or anything that might be seen by others as a conflict of interest, and keep the Register of Interests up to date.
* Commit to undertaking an active role in Healthwatch, contributing to meetings, and being involved with working groups and other projects.
* Prepare for meetings and events requested to attend, and ensure that staff are informed in a timely manner (apologies, or notice of late attendance) when unavailable for Healthwatch activities or meetings.
* Listen to and respect the views and experiences of others, and support fellow volunteers to contribute to the work of Healthwatch.
* Act in a reasonable and responsible way when working with or meeting staff, volunteers, and members of the public, and ensure that others are not put at risk.
* Treat others with respect, value diversity, and act in a way which does not discriminate against or exclude anyone.
* Not accept gifts or hospitality which could be seen as an attempt to influence the decisions, independence or activities of Healthwatch.

## Collective Responsibility

HWT&W operates as a collective, and it is important that the following ‘collective values’ are upheld by everyone involved.

* Once a decision has been democratically agreed, act in accordance with that decision. Volunteers may request that their different viewpoint is recorded appropriately.
* Carry out work and attend ‘visits’, meetings and engagements including HWT&W research engagements in line with the agreed Healthwatch work plan. Before speaking or writing on behalf of the Healthwatch, or representing Healthwatch at meetings, the volunteer must obtain prior permission from a Board member, or staff - ideally Managing Director if possible.
* Volunteers should not engage in pursuit of a single issue, or their own personal agenda items.
* When representing Healthwatch at a meeting or event (or in any other way), ensure that they are speaking on behalf of the Healthwatch, and not offering personal views.
* Provide a report to the office on any ‘representational meeting’ attended.

## Breach of Code of Conduct

Volunteers agree to abide by the decisions made by the Board on breaches of this Code of Conduct. Individuals who commit a breach this code of conduct will be subject to one of the following Healthwatch Board actions:

* **Censure**: an individual reprimand.
* **Suspension**: from some or all Healthwatch activities, for a specified time.
* **Cancellation**: removal from Healthwatch volunteer membership.

## Healthwatch Staff Support

The following support will be provided:

* An induction to Healthwatch, and training and development in the skills required for Healthwatch roles undertaken.
* Appropriate insurance cover for volunteers and staff when taking part in approved Healthwatch activities.
* Advice and support in dealing with any difficulties experienced in Healthwatch activities/work, and guidance for new situations.
* Appropriate reimbursement for the travel and approved out-of-pocket expenses needed to undertake work for Healthwatch.
* Correct and up-to-date information sent to volunteers in a way (such as email or post) and format agreed during volunteer induction, or any change later as notified by the volunteer.
* A Healthwatch ID badge to be worn when representing Healthwatch and at Healthwatch activities.

# Appendix 1 - The Seven (Nolan) Principles of Public Life

**Selflessness:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in-order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

**Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

# Appendix 2: Code of Conduct Declaration

**Code of Conduct Declaration**

Please Sign this Code of Conduct Declaration to affirm you have read and agree to abide by the Policy and Healthwatch expectations.

**Declaration**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Signed\*:** | **Date:** |
| **Print Name:** | |

*\*Signing up to the Code of Conduct does not tie you into an employment relationship*