

Volunteer Handbook

Everything you need to know about volunteering with Healthwatch North Yorkshire



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Volunteer Handbook

We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer with Healthwatch North Yorkshire. We depend on volunteers like you to ensure the voice of those living and working in North Yorkshire can be heard. People's experiences are at the heart of all we do, and it is people like you who choose to volunteer that make such a difference and help us achieve the biggest impact in our work.

This handbook is a useful reference tool, so please take the time to read it and keep it in a safe place so you can refer to it in future. It gives you background to who we are and what we do, an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of our volunteers and a summary of our policies and procedures that we have in place to support and protect you.

Our [Volunteer Policy](#) together with the other policies and procedures referred to in this handbook, ensures we maintain the highest possible standards, meet our legal responsibilities and ensure we provide a consistently high level of support to those in our communities who use health and social care services now and in the future.



About Healthwatch North Yorkshire

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires a local Healthwatch in every local authority area of England, to give individuals and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided in their area.

Nationally and locally, we have the power to make sure that those in charge of health and social care services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage health and social care services to involve people in decisions that affect them. People's views come first - especially those who find it hardest to be heard.

We champion what matters to people living and working in North Yorkshire and work with others to find ideas that work. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference.

Healthwatch England: All local Healthwatch are linked to a national body called Healthwatch England. You can find out more about Healthwatch England here: www.healthwatch.co.uk.

What services do we cover?

- All hospital-based health services for adults and children.
- All community-based health services for adults and children including GPs, dentists, pharmacists, podiatrists, health visitors, district nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and community psychiatric services.
- Residential and nursing home services for adults.
- Social work and/or care services including home helps, home carers, support workers and social workers or care managers.
- Services that combine health and social care including sexual health centres, wellbeing centres and day centres for older people.
- Services and support for children and young people apart from those who are in receipt of social care support from the local Council.



What powers do we have?

We are independent of central and local government with our own legal powers and set our own work plan to reflect the concerns of the local community. We are unique in having some statutory powers and duties whilst retaining our independence.

We can:

- Enter and view premises where health and/or social care services are provided. This power does not extend to premises that provide social care to children, but Healthwatch is expected to gather the views and experiences from children and young people in collaboration with local partners.
- Refer issues of concern direct to our local Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Have a seat on our local Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Escalate issues direct to Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Service providers and commissioners have a duty to respond to local Healthwatch reports and recommendations within 20 working days. This includes providers of children’s social care services.

We also have a duty to provide information to the public about health and social care services and service providers. You can find out more about [Healthwatch legal powers here](#).

What do we do?

There are three key aspects to our work:

Voice	Ensuring local people’s 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 Wellbeing 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. Also providing information and signposting to people wishing to complain about health and care services. Note: Healthwatch does not investigate individual complaints or act on behalf of individuals with complaints.

How do we work?

We believe that Healthwatch can only be truly effective if we reach as many people as possible, so we work with established networks, groups and organisations in North Yorkshire.

Our approach to being effective is underpinned by creating a ‘network of networks’ which:

- Builds strong links with local voluntary and community groups.
- Uses established community networks to share information, and to find out what matters to people.
- Works collaboratively with local partners who have strong local knowledge and connectivity with communities of interest and can support our work in obtaining the views of these communities.
- Builds a bank of trained volunteers who can be the eyes and ears of Healthwatch at grass-roots level.
- Champions the voices of those who are seldom heard.

Our Board

Our Board is responsible for setting our work plan each year based on local public feedback. They act in accordance with a decision-making process which is outlined in our [Decision-Making Policy](#).

Healthwatch North Yorkshire Board Members
Judith Bromfield
Agnes Crutchard
John Cunningham
Robert Peacock
Pat Southgate
Linda Wolstenholme
Lee Adams

Our Staff

As part of your induction, you will meet our team and we will help you understand how we all work together.

Healthwatch North Yorkshire Staff Team
Ashley Green, Chief Executive Officer
Gemma Hutcheson - Marketing, Communications and Business Support Officer
Ruth Stockdale, Network & Engagement Officer
Lada Rotshtein, Volunteer Officer
Alicia Rose, Research and Intelligence Officer

You can find out more about Healthwatch North Yorkshire and our projects here:

www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk/

Our Volunteers



There are thousands of volunteers across Healthwatch nationally. Volunteers get involved for a variety of reasons. Some want to make a positive difference to the lives of people; others want to develop new skills and some simply want to meet new people and have fun.

Every person who volunteers for us does have one thing in common, they're absolutely vital to our work.

Volunteer roles

At Healthwatch North Yorkshire we have a variety of volunteer roles. These include:

Community Engagement and Outreach Volunteer

You will play an important role in speaking to people in the community about their views on local health and care services. You will speak to people via hospitals, libraries, shopping centre stalls, Healthwatch and community events:

- **Event Assistant:** help at an (already organised) engagement event, stall or opportunity to raise awareness of Healthwatch North Yorkshire and/or capture people's experiences of health and care.
- **Event organiser:** how much you want to do is entirely up to you. It may be one stall or event every year or something more regular. We are delighted with anything you are able to do.
 - Stalls and displays - organise and attend a one-off or regular Healthwatch North Yorkshire information stall/display etc. at a local venue. This could be a workplace, local library or council building, leisure centre, supermarket etc. There would be supported to do this, but no staff presence at the event(s).
 - Markets, fetes and fairs: organise and attend a Healthwatch North Yorkshire stall at a market or fair/fete. This could be an awareness raising stall or to get feedback on a particular topic. There would be supported to do this, but no staff presence at the event.

Feedback Collector

There are a number of options you can do as a Feedback Collector in your local area. We don't expect anyone to do more than one of the different roles.

- in person: get the views of local people on a particular issue or general experiences of health and care services - this could be by attending a group to ask people about their experiences, asking colleagues at a workplace or asking people at your church or social group. You would need to record the responses you get and share them with us.
- online media: monitor local newspapers (and possibly local radio phone ins) for health-related content and comments. Appropriate information should be recorded, including the name and location of the person if known and the issue raised, and, as appropriate, you can post comments yourself to encourage people to share their experiences directly with Healthwatch North Yorkshire via email or our website.
- social media: join local health and care themed groups on Facebook or other online platform to share information about Healthwatch North Yorkshire and capture people's experiences of health or care. Encourage group members to share their experiences directly with Healthwatch North Yorkshire so we can capture the feedback and use it to influence service providers. Let us know which groups you are joining so we can keep track of the engagement.
- Survey assistant: contact individuals by phone to complete individual influencers network and other surveys with people who can't complete the surveys online. This will mostly be a monthly, time limited activity as the number of calls will depend on people who wish to complete surveys by phone

Information and Signposting Volunteer

An Information and Signposting volunteer help people get the information they need about health and care services and how to access community support. This is key part of what Healthwatch does and therefore you will be supporting people to get the information they need.

Board Members

As a Board member you will play a role in setting the strategic direction of Healthwatch North Yorkshire, ensuring that the Healthwatch North Yorkshire vision, aims, and values are upheld. You will ensure we deliver an effective Healthwatch in line with legislation.

Digital Communications Volunteer

Digital communications: Healthwatch North Yorkshire uses its website and social media to communicate our work and where people can go to access the support they need.

As a Digital communications volunteer you will be supporting Healthwatch North Yorkshire to manage its social media and website by creating and/ or reviewing content and responding to people's comments or queries.

Enter and View (Authorised Representative) Volunteer

Being an Enter and View (Authorised Representative) Volunteer involves visiting health and social care settings across North Yorkshire to gather feedback and assist the assessment how well the service is working. This is a great opportunity to get involved and influence improvements in local health and social care. Training and support will be given by Healthwatch staff.

And a Virtual Visitor Volunteer

A Virtual Visitor Volunteer assessment builds a picture of a health or social care service, such as a residential home through online interviewing of people using services, their families, carers and staff. This role has been newly created during the COVID - 19 pandemics as restrictions continue to prevent the physical entry of Healthwatch Enter and View authorised representatives. It is not a replacement for Enter and View visits as the former is a legal power to enter health and social care services.



Research Volunteer

You will work with staff to support the research function of Healthwatch North Yorkshire as we gather people's views and experiences of using different health and social care services.

Digital reviewer: One of Healthwatch's statutory duties is to involve people in the scrutiny of health and social care services. Healthwatch North Yorkshire wants our website and information to be accessible to everyone. Your role will be to help us get this right.

In addition to producing and reviewing our own materials, we are regularly invited to read over documents from health and social care organisations to ensure they are user friendly. We are also asked to provide feedback or comments on information produced and provided by health and social care organisations.

Administration Volunteer

There is never a dull moment at Healthwatch North Yorkshire. This is because we have such a wide remit in looking into health and social care services. We collect a lot of information, attend a lot of meetings and events as well as running our own event and meetings to engage with our communities. Therefore, we need to be organised and have 'back office' support.

Healthwatch Ambassador Volunteer

Healthwatch North Yorkshire Ambassadors are our eyes and ears on the ground, in the community sharing what we do as well as sharing back information collected from our communities. You can be:

- **Information Sharing Volunteer:** share our surveys and requests on social media, by email and more with friends, family, local groups, work colleagues or others to encourage them to give their views. Also work with us to get articles and links in local newsletters and on social media to spread the word.
- **Local Scoping Volunteer:** there are a number of different roles you can do as a Local Scoping Volunteer. How much you do is entirely up to you. We don't expect anyone to do everything!
 - **community venues:** visit local community venues (libraries, community centres, supermarkets etc.) that could take Healthwatch North Yorkshire information (newsletters and displays/stalls). If the venues are willing to have our information, displays or stalls record their response and contact details to arrange activities. You can also set up the opportunities or pass them to an Event Organiser Volunteer via your Healthwatch North Yorkshire staff contact.

- **community activities:** research local opportunities, groups and socials to find out about places that might be willing to have a Healthwatch stall every few months or every year. Record the information and if possible, follow up to arrange the stall or pass on to your Healthwatch North Yorkshire staff contact.
- **Planning Community events Volunteer:** research events and activities happening in North Yorkshire/your local area during 2022, e.g., fetes, fairs etc., where Healthwatch North Yorkshire could have a stall. Record the information, which should include a weblink and contact details to find out more/book a stall. You could also get in touch with the organisers to find out if we could have a stall, how much it would cost, deadlines for booking etc.
- **Healthwatch Representation Volunteer:** Healthwatch North Yorkshire is invited to numerous meetings and events, and we need volunteers who are happy to attend some meetings and events on our behalf.

Please note as a volunteer you may wish to undertake several roles or you may choose only to carry out certain roles and/or specialist tasks where you have specific skills or have special interest. We will discuss and agree the time you spend volunteering at Healthwatch North Yorkshire with you.

Our commitment to you

We have a dedicated Volunteer Officer, who will support and guide you in your volunteering role with us: Lada Rotshtein.

We want to make sure that you enjoy your role and get the most out of it, and we make a commitment to our volunteers.

We will:

- Always treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation.
- Ensure you are clear about your responsibilities whilst volunteering. You will be properly inducted into your role.
- Give you information about the training and support available to help you carry out your role. We will never expect you to complete a task you are not comfortable with.
- Provide you with support through regular meetings or discussions, appropriate to your individual needs, abilities and skills.
- Offer you fair, honest and timely feedback on your contribution.
- Update you on how your contribution has made a difference.

How we will support you

Introduction

Your Volunteer Officer will introduce you to the Healthwatch North Yorkshire staff and volunteers you will be volunteering with. The Volunteer Officer will also provide more detail about the sections in this handbook. Please use this opportunity to ask any questions and highlight any areas where you would like further training and support.

If you will be volunteering with us over a significant period of time, you will undergo a trial period which gives us both a chance to assess how things are working out.

Training

We want to ensure that you feel happy and confident to carry out your role. As a Healthwatch North Yorkshire volunteer you will be offered training if required.

Support

As part of your ongoing volunteering development, please make a note of how each task you carried out went, what you did, what you enjoyed and if there were any issues that arose.

Each volunteer will have a review meeting and the frequency of these will vary depending on the nature of your role and your time commitment. The 1-2-1 meeting, in person or by phone, will focus on how the role is going, what support you need and update you on what's happening at Healthwatch North Yorkshire. It is an opportunity for volunteers and staff to raise issues and for you to talk constructively about your involvement with us.

What we expect from you

Healthwatch North Yorkshire expects high standards from all our volunteers. To ensure you get the most out of your role, volunteers will:

- Always treat Healthwatch North Yorkshire volunteers, staff and supporters with respect, consideration and appreciation.
- Act in a professional way whenever you represent Healthwatch North Yorkshire.
- Act in a way that doesn't discriminate against or exclude anyone.
- Provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to fulfil your volunteering commitment, or if you no longer wish to volunteer.
- Ask your Volunteer Manager if you don't fully understand your role and responsibilities or need any other guidance.

Reliability and Commitment

It's very important that you are reliable, and you stick to any arrangements you've made with us. If your circumstances change, please tell the Volunteer Officer as soon as possible. If you're planning to go on holiday, please let the Volunteer Officer know that you'll be unavailable for certain dates and when you plan to return.



Read more here: [Volunteer Role Descriptions](#)

Essential policies and procedures

As a volunteer, you'll need to be aware of the following policies and procedures. Please take a few minutes to have a read through and familiarise yourself with them.

Expenses

We want to make sure that volunteers are not out of pocket or financially worse off as a result of their involvement in volunteer activities. We will reimburse volunteers for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering with us.

Volunteers are required to complete expenses forms each month; these are available electronically or in hard copy and must be submitted to Healthwatch North Yorkshire at the end of each month.

Please discuss with the Volunteer Officer what you can claim for, including public transport or using your own car and the importance of keeping receipts and records of where you have been.

Expenses will be paid directly into your bank account. Read our Volunteer Expenses Policy for full details.

Travelling by car

It's important to note that if you're involved in an activity for Healthwatch North Yorkshire that involves using your car, even travelling to and from a venue, you must inform your own car insurance company.

Most insurance companies agree to cover car journeys for volunteers at no extra charge. We require all volunteers to check this with their own insurance company. Your car insurance will not be covered by Healthwatch North Yorkshire.

Code of conduct

We have a [Code of Conduct Policy](#), which incorporates the following:

- **Gifts:** Giving or receiving gifts may give the impression of favouritism and could raise expectations of the level of support you can provide in your role. As such, we ask that volunteers don't give or receive personal gifts to or from staff or anyone receiving support services from Healthwatch North Yorkshire.
- **How we talk:** When you're volunteering for Healthwatch North Yorkshire you may notice that we use a certain style of language. The way we talk is important and our 'voice' is a key part of helping people understand who we are and what we do. It's essential that we maintain one voice that's consistent, clear and easy to understand. Whether you're speaking on behalf of Healthwatch North Yorkshire, drafting an email or writing a letter, it's well worth getting to grips with the Healthwatch 'tone of voice'. Your Volunteer Officer will help you with this.
- **What we wear:** As a volunteer for Healthwatch North Yorkshire, you're also an ambassador for the organisation. You're responsible for presenting a positive image to visitors, clients and the community.

Please use your judgement to dress appropriately for the activities you're asked to carry out. If you're ever unsure about what to wear, just ask your Volunteer Officer.

Conflicts of interest

We realise that volunteers may sometimes know Healthwatch North Yorkshire stakeholders in a personal capacity - as friends, family or colleagues. As an organisation which represents the public, it is vital that we remain impartial and transparent.

Health and safety

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works and volunteers for us. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by health and safety legislative requirements. It's important that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards in order to provide a safe environment for all.

It's important that you:

- Carry out your duties without endangering either your own health and safety, or that of other volunteers, Healthwatch staff, third parties and/or the general public.
- Comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to safety and follow guidance provided by Healthwatch North Yorkshire.
- Inform your Volunteer Officer of any personal health and safety requirements that you have.

Healthwatch North Yorkshire will carry out risk assessments on activities you do and venues you visit where necessary and will share with you the outcomes of those assessments, to ensure you know what you can do to keep yourself safe whilst volunteering for us.

Our [Health and Safety Policy](#) provides full details.

Working alone

Whilst it is unlikely that volunteers will be asked to meet individuals on a one-to-one basis in the course of their volunteer work, where this does occur, volunteers must ensure that their Volunteer Officer or other Healthwatch staff member has authorised the meeting and Healthwatch staff have been informed of the details of the meeting date, time and the location.

A [Risk Assessment](#) must be carried out prior to a one-to-one meeting to agree for example, a public venue, action to take in the event of a medical emergency or violent behaviour and how to take confidentiality and privacy into consideration. An [Online risk assessment](#) must be carried out prior to an online event. An individual [Risk assessment template](#) as a part of the Health and Safety Policy.

Regular telephone contact between the volunteer and the Volunteer Officer or other staff member should be arranged in advance.

Volunteers should also leave details of where they will be with their family in case of emergency.

Should a volunteer be in a lone working situation when an incident or accident occurs, they should report this to their Volunteer Officer or the Healthwatch staff team as soon as possible and complete an [accident reporting form](#).

In the event of fire at a venue, then all venue procedures must be adhered to. The Volunteer Officer should be informed of any fire incidents through the incident reporting procedure above.

Accidents, incidents and insurance

All accidents and incidents must be reported to the Volunteer Officer as soon as possible. If you feel that it's a real emergency, please contact the emergency services immediately. You are covered by our 'Employers Liability Insurance' and our 'Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance' when carrying out your volunteering role on our behalf.

Personal safety and ID badges

We ask that all our volunteers provide us with an emergency contact, who we will contact in the unlikely event of an emergency. If it is required for your role, you'll be issued with a volunteer ID badge which you should always have with you when carrying out your activities.

Clear boundaries are important for volunteers and staff. They enable us to carry out a service according to agreed expectations and ensure that everyone receives the same quality of service.

Please refuse politely if a service user asks for your personal contact details. You may feel it would be acceptable for someone to phone you if they are in trouble or to pass information on to you at a later stage, but it could put you at risk from intrusion and potentially create dependency. It is natural to want to help someone in need, but our aim is to encourage independence, and our signposting function provides support in this respect.

Safeguarding

All Healthwatch North Yorkshire volunteers are required to undergo safeguarding training as part of their induction process. This will equip you with the safeguarding skills to act appropriately and confidently to protect children and vulnerable adults you may come into contact with.

If your role involves working with particular groups or individual people you may be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check as part of our policy on safeguarding. Read the full Healthwatch [Safeguarding Policies for Adults and Children](#).

Any concern that a vulnerable adult or child may be suffering harm should be discussed with a staff member as soon as the concerns arise. They will make a decision regarding breaching confidentiality and progressing in line with our safeguarding policies.

If someone discloses abuse to you, remember to stay calm, listen carefully, rather than question, and be sympathetic. You must report the disclosure to a staff member as soon as possible and write down what was said and who you reported it to.

Data Protection

Before we can collect, store, or use data about an individual, the data protection law and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), requires us to ensure that we have that individual's consent to do so. The way we do this is by making sure we work within our data protection policy and procedures. You may, in your volunteer role with us, have access to and handle the personal information of the people you are helping. It's vital that you are aware of our policy and procedure.

Your contact details will be kept on a database and accessed only by appropriate staff. Your application form, references and emergency contact details will be kept securely. You have the

right to access your personal record. From time to time, we may want to use photographs of our volunteers in various publicity media. You will be asked to consent to this; it is not compulsory.

Read our [Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy](#).

Confidentiality

Volunteers must maintain confidentiality during their time with Healthwatch North Yorkshire. For this reason, when you complete your [Volunteer Agreement](#) you are also signing a confidentiality declaration. This means that confidential information about people we support, volunteers, Healthwatch North Yorkshire staff and our work is kept private, unless sharing this information is required by law.

Dealing with difficulties

If you encounter a difficulty with any aspect of the role, or your experience with us isn't working out as hoped, please talk to the Volunteer Officer as soon as possible for advice and support. Together we will try to work out any difficulties.

We aim to make volunteering a positive experience but recognise that sometimes, for all sorts of reasons, problems can occur. We have a clear and fair problem-solving process to help resolve any issues at the earliest opportunity.

This process is only for dealing with concerns with the volunteer relationship; for other concerns or complaints please refer to our [Complaints Policy](#).

We will make reasonable adjustments within the organisation's resources to ensure that volunteers can engage fully in the problem-solving process. Volunteers may bring a support person or advocate to any meeting that forms part of the problem-solving process.

Our problem-solving process

1. We will tell volunteers about any problems regarding their volunteering at the earliest opportunity and will agree a way to move forward in the role. If appropriate, volunteers could be offered training, or agree a change in their volunteering role.
2. If this does not resolve the problem, we will offer a formal meeting with our Chief Executive Officer to discuss.
3. If a formal meeting is required, we will talk through our concerns with the volunteer, explain what the issues are and outline their impact. We will explore with the volunteer if there are any other opportunities to resolve the concerns and notify the volunteer of our decision within 15 working days.
4. If the volunteer does not agree with the outcome of the formal meeting, they may raise their concern as an appeal with the Board. The Board will acknowledge the appeal within five working days and offer an appeal meeting.
5. The Board will notify the volunteer of their response within 10 working days of this meeting. The Board's decision is final.

If we are unable to agree a resolution with the volunteer, they may be asked to stop their volunteering for the organisation. If this happens, we will signpost volunteers to other opportunities.

Please note there are some occasions where we will not be able to offer any support or the opportunity for volunteers to change their behaviour or practice. While not a complete list, this may include threats, abuse or attacks on any staff, volunteer or customers, breaking policies on

safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, breaking confidentiality and criminal acts such as theft or fraud.

Complaints

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve the way we do things and provide a better service.

If you wish to make a complaint or you receive a complaint from someone about your service or anything to do with Healthwatch North Yorkshire, please pass this on to the Volunteer Officer.

Our [Complaint's policy](#) outlines the full process to ensure we capture all feedback.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to treating all volunteers and volunteer applicants fairly. We accept volunteers based on their suitability for the role.

We won't discriminate against any volunteers because of their age, disability, gender, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

We expect our volunteers to uphold our [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) whilst representing us as a volunteer. The policy should be part of the volunteer induction as well as our [Equality and Diversity Monitoring](#) Form.

Moving on and references

You can end your volunteer role with Healthwatch North Yorkshire at any time. Please let your Volunteer Officer know. We would like to have a chat with you about your reasons for leaving, although this is not mandatory.

If you have been a volunteer with us for over six months, we can also supply you with a reference upon request.