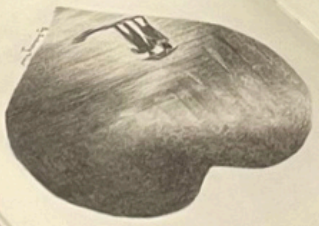


Volunteer Handbook

April 2025





"I need to see a doctor" tips for

Health



League of Women Voters

Use the QR Code to discover how to make it your GP or PH



"I need to see a doctor"



"I need to see a doctor"



"I need to see a doctor"

Welcome to Healthwatch South Tees

Welcome and thank you for choosing to volunteer with Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, operating under the name of Healthwatch South Tees (HWST). We rely on the support of individuals like you who choose to share their time, skills, knowledge and talents to positively affect others.

You're joining a flexible, adaptable team who are the voice of local people and communities using health and social care services. The work we do does make a difference. Whether you've joined us for a short while to gain experience or new skills before moving on or for longer terms to give something back, we value your support and hope your volunteer journey with us is worthwhile and rewarding.

As a volunteer, you will have a dedicated Volunteer Supporter who will be your main point of contact. They will help to explain the volunteer role and carry out your volunteer induction. Your Volunteer Supporter will also check that you are enjoying your role.

As well as outlining roles and responsibilities, this pack also serves as a reference tool for practical information about HWST; so please take time out to read this document. As updates are made to this pack your Volunteer Supporter will notify you.

The organisation holding the Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland and Healthwatch Middlesbrough contract is Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP).

PCP is a multi-award winning health and wellbeing charity operating across the North East. For further information please visit www.pcp.uk.net. Registered charity No. 1067888. Company registered in England No. 3491237. Registered address: Pioneering Care Centre, Carers Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham. DL5 4SF. © Pioneering Care Centre.

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We are an independent champion for people who use health and social care services and to make sure that those running services, put people at the heart of care – especially those who find it hardest to be heard.

We focus on ensuring that people’s experiences and concerns about health and social care services are heard and we speak out on their behalf to inform service development and ensure they meet the needs of local people.

How we do this:

We are here to listen to what you like about services and what you think could be improved. No matter how big or small the issue, we want to hear about it.

This is done through our:

- Information and signposting service – People can contact us with any queries or concerns about health and social care services.
- Focussed community consultations, surveys and attending events – Talk to local people individually and in groups about their experiences of health and social care services.
- Enter and View activities – We have the legal power to visit health and social care services to see them in action, this is called an ‘Enter and View’. It offers an opportunity for us to speak to patients, public, their families and staff.
- Positive relationships with professionals working in the heart of communities who provide regular feedback about what people are telling them and experiencing. This role is called a Community Champion.

All of these activities help us to:

1. Identify and highlight what is working well.
2. Recommend improvements for specific service areas.



Our Aims and Outcomes

Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and social care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



Healthwatch South Tees (HWST) has the following legislative powers:

- To 'Enter and View' specific types of premises where care and services are provided.
- To ask for information and expect a response within a specific timescale.
- To make recommendations to service commissioners and providers and expect a response within a specific timescale.
- To refer matters to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and expect a response.
- To alert the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to concerns about specific care providers.

Overarching objectives

HWST will:

- Fulfil its statutory duties and functions, holding providers and commissioners of health and care services to account.
- Operate as stated in The Health and Social Care Act 2012, embedded in local communities.
- Act as a local consumer champion, representing the collective voice of patients, service users, carers and the public through its statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board and providing robust challenge and scrutiny in the interests of the citizens of South Tees.
- Exercise real influence on commissioners, providers, regulators and Healthwatch England, using its knowledge of what matters most to local people.
- Report concerns about the quality of local health and care services to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Provide information to patients and public who need to access health and care services promoting informed choice.
- Support individuals to get information and independent advocacy if they need help to complain about health and care services.
- Build on and utilise existing networks, knowledge, skills and services in support of local Healthwatch rather than duplicate what is already in place.

For more information on our board [click here](#).

Our Volunteer Charter

This Charter sets out the principles to which HWST subscribes as an organisation in working with volunteers. We see volunteering as a reciprocal relationship between HWST and the people who volunteer, one that is built on mutual trust and respect. We believe it is important therefore to set out clearly what we expect from you and what you should expect from us, as outlined in our Volunteer Policy.

We expect our volunteers to:

- Be reliable;
- Be honest;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Make the most of training and support opportunities;
- Carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation;
- Carry out tasks within agreed guidelines;
- Respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute;
- Comply with the organisation's policies and procedures;
- Keep in contact with the HWST, letting us know if your circumstances change or if you are unable to make a commitment.

What you should expect from us:

- Volunteers should have a clear idea of the role they are being asked to perform and of the responsibility that goes with the role.
- The relationship between paid staff and volunteers should be complementary and mutually beneficial. (There is no intention to create a legal contract with this Charter.)
- Volunteers will be told who is responsible for their support (Volunteer Supporter). They should have regular access to this person, and the person should ensure that each volunteer is given adequate support.
- Volunteers will be provided with relevant training to enable them to carry out their volunteer role and work within HWST Policies & Procedures.
- PCP values the experience and knowledge of volunteers and recognises that they should be given the opportunity to be involved in the organisations planning and review processes.

- Volunteers should be protected against exploitation of their hopes and expectations, both as volunteers and as individuals.
- Volunteers should not be put under moral pressure to undertake a role, which is against their principles.
- Volunteers should be adequately protected against any risks involved in volunteering for the organisation.
- Volunteers should not suffer financially by volunteering.
- Volunteering should be a fulfilling experience.
- Through adequate support, volunteers should be able to develop their potential.
- Volunteers should feel able to cease volunteering when they choose.
- Volunteers have the right to say no.



Supporting Our Volunteers

Recruitment

HWST is committed to equality and diversity, and to offering equality of opportunity to volunteers from different backgrounds.

Role descriptions are available for all volunteer roles, and all volunteers are recruited through a fair and equal process.

Where possible, acceptance as a volunteer may be subject to receipt of 2 satisfactory Character Recommendations (references). In very rare circumstances for specific projects, we may also require a positive outcome from a DBS check

Under exceptional circumstances Senior Managers may grant exemptions from DBS checks for volunteers who have learning difficulties and who are unable to supply the necessary DBS application documentation. These cases will be individually reviewed and the relevant Volunteer Supporter informed accordingly.

Induction and Training

HWST provides the necessary training to enable our volunteers to perform specific roles. Furthermore, all volunteers will have an induction within 6 weeks of commencing their volunteer role. This covers:

- Meeting the team you are working with;
- Arranging mentoring and role shadowing, if needed;
- An overview of volunteer process, i.e., reviews, expenses etc.
- A tour of the location you are working from, including the fire evacuation procedures, first aid contacts and any relevant Health and Safety information for your volunteer role;
- Policy induction training, including:
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Confidentiality
 - Health and Safety
- Mandatory training, including:
 - Risk Assessment
 - Fire Awareness



- Safeguarding Adults
- A discussion of other training requirements that may be needed for your volunteer role.
- A discussion about your training and development needs.

Support

Every volunteer is designated a Volunteer Supporter to support them. Your Volunteer Supporter will regularly discuss your volunteering, as well as any successes and problems.

Volunteer Supporters will explain the standards we expect and encourage and support volunteers to achieve and maintain them.

After the initial 6 months of volunteering, you will complete an evaluation with your Volunteer Supporter; this is to ensure you feel happy and supported within your volunteer role and identify any potential areas for support. Thereafter, in addition to regular catch ups with your Volunteer Supporter, you will have an annual supervision.

Finally, every year, our volunteers are requested to complete an 'Annual Evaluation Survey'. The aim of this is to help us evaluate how we work with volunteers and what changes we can make to improve the overall experience.

Additional Volunteer Opportunities

If, while you're volunteering with us, you feel you want to change your volunteer role speak to your Volunteer Supporter, and then can talk to you about the additional opportunities.

A summary, including role descriptions of all of our volunteer opportunities can be found on our website: [Volunteering with us](#)



The Essentials

Volunteer Hours

HWST complies with The Working Time Regulations 1998. We place the wellbeing of our volunteers, as well as the importance of your rest and recuperation at the heart of what we do. For shifts lasting more than six hours, volunteers should take at least a 30-minute uninterrupted break. Volunteers should also have a minimum of 11 consecutive hours rest between volunteer shifts.

Volunteers should not:

- Work / volunteer excessively, or
- Volunteer for more than 48 hours per week

HWST will recognise and monitor the contribution, in terms of hours, that volunteers make to the organisation and record this contribution in relevant reports. Every Volunteer has the responsibility to complete a Volunteer Hours Form (timesheet). This form must be returned to your Volunteer Supporter on a monthly basis.

Expenses

HWST volunteers will be reimbursed for approved out-of-pocket expenses on presentation of valid receipts and claims forms for:

- Food: If a volunteer supports for more than 6 hours in single session, a meal can be provided. Please talk to your Volunteer Supporter regarding arrangements for this expense.
- Travel: HWST will reimburse for travel by public transport, or mileage if you are using personal transport (including cycling), and where relevant, car parking costs with valid receipts.
 - Volunteers who claim mileage as part of their volunteer role, i.e., travel to visit clients, must inform their insurance company and arrange appropriate cover.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits>



Claims should be made on a monthly basis, using the relevant volunteer expenses form, attaching receipts as required. Completed forms should be sent to your Volunteer Supporter for authorisation, before being sent to finance.

Expenses will be paid within 14 days. (Please note that 14 days applies to authorised and signed forms, any missing information or signatures will be sent back to the Volunteer Supporter and will not be processed until corrected.)

Volunteering, and Claiming Benefits

If you are in receipt of welfare benefits, you can still volunteer and receive out-of-pocket expenses without affecting your claim, providing that you comply with the relevant regulations.

Please ensure you inform the Department of Work and Pension, if you are receiving benefits while volunteering. For more information, visit the following government website: [Health and Wellbeing](#)

There are many reasons why you may have volunteered, and volunteering can itself impact positively on your general health and wellbeing. For instance, by making new friends and helping others, many volunteers feel an improvement in their own self-esteem.

We do however require to know from you if you have any health conditions that may affect your volunteering, such as asthma or other allergies, epilepsy or any mental health conditions. Throughout your induction, your Volunteer Supporter will request that you inform us of any health conditions / prescribed medication you are required to take; appropriate Risk Assessments / Wellness Action Plans will be carried out to ensure bespoke support and safeguarding measures are put in place for you.

This information will be reviewed on an annual basis with your Volunteer Supporter, however, we request that any changes are communicated with your Volunteer Supporter as soon as possible.

All information is treated in the strictest confidence.



Engagement with Service Users

HWST would strongly discourage contact between volunteers and service users, whilst you are deemed to be “off duty”, as this could put you at risk.

Equipment

HWST will provide the appropriate equipment/tools/materials to enable volunteers to carry out their tasks.

Insurance

All registered volunteers are covered by Insurance (this does not include Personal Accident Insurance). All volunteers will be made aware of how to record accidents and incidents during induction with their Volunteer Supporter.

Holidays and Sickness

It is important that you tell us in good time of any planned holidays, or, if due to sickness you are not able to fulfil your volunteer activity. This is particularly important when supporting service users or where you might be facilitating a group or social activity.

Photographs and Multi-Media

Upon induction, all volunteers will be requested to complete a Photography, Filming, Publicity and Data Storage Consent Form. This is to confirm whether volunteers agree to having their photo taken for use in one of our publications, such as the charity’s annual report or to depict services or projects for publicity materials. Similarly we may wish to include quotes from you, or to involve you in multi-media events for promotional campaigns. Volunteers are fully within their right to refuse consent. Consent can also be withdrawn at any point (by contacting your Volunteer Supporter), however, withdrawing consent may not affect the material that has already been used.

From time to time HWST will ask service users participating in activities if they agree to having their photograph taken, for reasons similar to those outlined above. In all such cases service users will be approached by a HWST staff member and asked to sign a permission slip.

It is important that volunteers do not photograph or record service users (audio or video) themselves as this may constitute a breach of trust and lead to disciplinary action.



Smoking Policy

There is a total ban on smoking in all parts of HWSTs premises without exception, including the use of e-cigarettes/vapes. This applies to the building and grounds.

Receiving Gifts


HWST accepts normal and appropriate gestures of hospitality and goodwill (whether given to or received from third parties) so long as the giving or receiving of gifts meets the following requirements:

- It is not made with the intention of influencing the party to whom it is being given, to obtain or reward the retention of a business or a business advantage, or as an explicit or implicit exchange for favours or benefits;
- It is not made with the suggestion that a return favour is expected;
- It is compliant with the law;
- It does not include cash or a cash equivalent (e.g. a voucher or gift certificate);
- It is appropriate for the circumstances (e.g. giving small gifts around Christmas or as a small thank you to a company for helping with a large project upon completion);
- It is of an appropriate type and value and given at an appropriate time, taking into account the reason for the gift;
- It is given/received openly, not secretly;
- It is not selectively given to a key, influential person, clearly with the intention of directly influencing them;
- It is not above a certain excessive value, as pre-determined by HWST's Receipt of Gifts and Hospitality Policy;
- It is not offered to, or accepted from, a government official or representative or politician or political party, without the prior approval of the relevant Senior Leader.

When anyone receives a gift they should refer to HWST's Receipt of Gifts and Hospitality Policy to determine when to accept it and how to record that gift. If in doubt, please speak with your Volunteer Supporter.

Personal Appearance and What to Wear

If you are in contact with service users or members of the public (or both), then it is very important that you convey a professional manner in your personal appearance and dress appropriately at all times. This is important to service users you may be supporting and also because you are a representative of HWST.



Reliability and Commitment

It is important that you are punctual and ready to start your volunteer role at the agreed time. This is a matter of courtesy to service users, other volunteers and staff. If you are persistently late or fail to meet agreed commitments, your Volunteer Supporter will meet with you to discuss any problems or difficulties in meeting existing commitments.

Providing Feedback

HWST's aim is to provide volunteers with an enjoyable and positive experience. If you have any concerns or are, unhappy/unsure about any aspect of your voluntary role, please talk to your Volunteer Supporter.

Your feedback is important to shaping volunteering at HWST. To gain feedback you will be contacted no more than twice a year to complete a volunteer review/evaluation, these may be done electronically, or with your Volunteer Supporter.

Volunteers' Involvement in Decision Making

HWST is committed to involving volunteers in the planning and monitoring of the organisation's activities. Volunteers will be given the opportunity to be involved in the organisation's sub groups relevant to their area of activity and experience.

Social Media - Volunteers represent HWST and our brand. Before a volunteer uses social media to promote or talk about their role as a volunteer, they must ensure the information they are promoting is appropriate and have received relevant consent to be promoted publicly. Before posting any content, whether this be written information, images, videos or other, get approval with your Volunteer Supporter. If you are unsure, contact healthwatchsouthtees@pcp.uk.net. This is to protect you, if you may be supporting work that isn't in the public domain.

Volunteers must not create social media accounts that represent the HWST or a service brand under any circumstances.

For further detail, please refer to our Use of Social Media Policy and Social Media and Security Policy - [click here](#) .



Legal Requirements

When volunteering with HWST you'll need to be aware of our company policies and procedures, particularly those below which affect not only you as a volunteer, but also where you are working directly with service users.

These policies and procedures are highlighted to you at your induction and volunteer training, Please take a few minutes to give them a good read through and do get in touch if you have any questions. If you would like a printed copy of any policies, please ask your Volunteer Supporter.

Health and Safety

HWST has a duty of care to avoid exposing volunteers to risks to their health and safety. HWST has a series of health & safety policies and procedures in place to protect volunteers. In addition, all volunteers receive a health & safety induction, relevant to their volunteering role.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy Statement
- Lone Working Policy
- Violence in the Workplace Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy

Risk Assessments

As part of managing health and safety, HWST must control the risks in the workplace. To do this, HWST use Risk Assessment(s) as a tool to evaluate what might cause harm to people and decide whether reasonable steps are being taken to prevent that harm.

There are numerous activities carried out at HWST each of which requires a separate risk assessment including but not limited to fire safety, lone working, classes and courses, events, visits and trips, equipment etc. Other legislation, notably the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations, the Manual Handling Regulations and the Display Screen Equipment Regulations also require risk assessments of specific areas of work.



Some employees and volunteers have particular requirements, which will require a risk assessment, for example:

- New and/or expectant mothers who may be more prone to health-related risks
- People with disabilities whose disability may mean that reasonable adjustments are needed to enable them carry out their role and minimise risks

If, as a volunteer you identify any health and safety concerns, highlight these to your Volunteer Supporter immediately.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Risk Assessment Policy

Accidents and Incidents

HWST have clear policies and procedures for reporting accidents and incidents for staff and volunteers, whether these occur in our premises or elsewhere when working with service users, and this includes threatening or aggressive behaviours.

Volunteers must report any accidents or incidents they have had, or witnessed to their Volunteer Supporter immediately, ensuring that no-one is left in a vulnerable or unsafe position or place.

Volunteers will be required to complete accident and incident reports, and potentially witness statements. In the event that follow up is required, this will be undertaken by the Project / Service Lead, and Operations Manager, and you will be informed of the outcomes.


Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Accident, Incident, Near Miss Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding: Adult and Child Protection

The term safeguarding applies to a continuum from low to high-risk types of abuse. THWST has a duty of care to all our service users, staff and volunteers.

As a volunteer you may find that you have concerns about a HWST employee, fellow volunteer or service user; or a person may confide in you that they have been, or are being abused. If someone confides in you, stay calm, listen carefully and be sympathetic. You are not expected to investigate child or adult protection issues, but



rather to report, in line with our policies and procedures. It is important that you make a full and accurate record of your concerns, of what is said, heard and seen and pass this information on immediately to your Volunteer Supporter or, in their absence, to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. You may be requested to complete a Safeguarding Incident Report Form, and be available to discuss your concerns as an investigation is carried out.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure

Confidentiality and Data Protection

HWST operates to a Confidentiality Policy, which incorporates the Data Protection Act. Volunteers must respect this and are provided with the policy within induction training to ensure they understand how this applies to them.

Should confidentiality issues arise, it is the responsibility of the Volunteer Supporter to report it following the relevant procedure.

All HWST volunteers are asked to sign a confidentiality statement before commencing their volunteer role. All personal information should be treated as strictly confidential and should not be discussed outside your volunteer role.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Generic Client Information Sheet (how we use your data)

Equality and Diversity

HWST is committed to ensuring that services are accessible to people across all equality characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and that opportunities for employment or volunteering are made available without bias or discrimination.

HWST will not tolerate any kind of bullying, harassment, discrimination or oppressive practices. Everybody has the right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect irrespective of race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief or any other characteristics.

HWST is committed to equal opportunities. Any volunteer who feels that they have been discriminated against should complain using the organisation's Complaints Policy.



Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- EDI Policy Statement
- Dignity at Work Policy

Volunteer Management

Volunteering is a core activity of HWST,. Alongside this handbook, our Volunteer Policy sets out in more formal terms how we work with volunteers, from recruitment, training to deployment through to support and completion of their volunteering experience.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Volunteer Policy

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve and provide a better service for our service users. HWST has a complaints policy and procedure to ensure that we respond to all complaints, whether informal or formal, and that the complainant sees that we will respond quickly to any complaint.

HWST will ensure volunteers are aware of how to raise any grievances they may have, and how HWST will deal with volunteers acting in an inappropriate manner. This will be through their Volunteer Supporter, with redress to the Senior Leadership Team member as appropriate, should problems not be resolved in the first instance.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Complaints Policy and Procedure

Whistleblowing

HWST are committed to managing the organisation in the best way possible. HWST have a Whistleblowing Policy in place to reassure people that it is safe and acceptable to speak up if they have concerns. HWST encourages employees and volunteers to express legitimate concerns about malpractice and wrongdoing. These should be raised these at an early stage and in the right way.

Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- Whistleblowing Policy
- 

Leaving HWST

HWST are happy to support short-term volunteering; this can take form of student placements, work experience etc. Equally, you may have been volunteering with HWST for years and now fancy moving onto somewhere new. Whichever it is, we are here to help.

Ending Your Volunteering

When the time is right for you to leave, please let your Volunteer Supporter know. They will conduct an Exit Interview with you, or ask you to complete an Exit Evaluation form. They will also provide you with a reference if required, and upon your leaving, will delete your personal information in line with our retention schedule (normally held for 1 year). If you would prefer your information deleting before this time you can make a formal request by contacting healthwatchesouthtees@pcp.uk.net.

If, while volunteering with us you become inactive for a period of 12 months, your information will be deleted (unless your Volunteer Supporter contacts to confirm that you would like to remain registered with us). After this point, if you wish to volunteer with HWST, you will need to complete the application and induction process again.

HWST reserves the right to end a volunteer position at any time, if the volunteer has been found not to be carrying out agreed role or has not adhered to HWST expectations.



Useful External Support

Useful Mental Health and Emotional Support

NHS 111 – option 2 for crisis mental health support

If you, or someone you know, are in a mental health crisis, you can now call NHS 111 and select option 2 for urgent mental health support. NHS 111 is available 24/7. If you are deaf or have hearing loss please use NHS 111 – SignVideo or use the 18001 111 Relay UK app.

TEWV

The Mental Health and Learning Disability NHS Trust for County Durham and Darlington, Teesside, North Yorkshire, York and Selby.

Teesside Mind

Teesside's Leading Mental Health Charity

CRUSE

Advice, information, and support to anyone who has been bereaved 01642 210 284.

Kooth

Offers anonymous support for people with mental health and no referral needed – it is a website that offers support for children and adults and is accessible 7 days per week.

Qwell

Offers free, safe, and anonymous mental wellbeing support for adults across the UK.

Samaritans

The Samaritans are there to listen. 24 hours a day 365 days a year, call 116 123 or visit

.

Health and Safety

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>

Financial Support

MoneyHelper

For everyday support MoneyHelper have brought together their most useful tools, calculators, and guides to help you keep on top of your money. They have a range of tools and guides, visit:

Stop Loan Sharks

If you have borrowed from a loan shark or are worried about someone else, you can contact this service to report your concerns, visit:

Be Gamble Aware

Offer free, confidential help and support to anyone who's worried about their – or someone else's – gambling, visit:

Olio

OLIO connects neighbours with each other and with local businesses so surplus food can be shared, not thrown away, visit:



healthwatch

Middlesbrough

www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk

Freephone: 0800 118 1691

Text only: 07451288789

Email: healthwatchsouthtees@pcp.uk.net

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healthwatch

Redcar and Cleveland

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Sign up to our e-bulletin!



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