

1. Definitions

Healthwatch refers to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

Employees refers to Healthwatch employees.

Volunteers refers to all Healthwatch volunteers including Directors.

2. Scope

This policy covers all employees and volunteers.

3. Summary

Equality means everyone is treated the same exact way, regardless of need or any other individual difference. Equity means everyone is provided with what they need to succeed. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove's values.

Healthwatch recognises the diversity of the population it serves and takes seriously the obligation to reach and include a diversity of people, and to ensure its credibility within a diversity of communities. We are committed to policy, procedure and practice that recognises and respects the identity, rights, abilities and needs of everyone, and actively opposes all forms of unfair discrimination.

As a public sector body, we are committed to meeting the duties set out under the Equality Act 2010, which outlines the legal framework for creating a fair and more equal society. This vital piece of legislation protects people's rights in law and keeps all of us from unfair treatment and discrimination.

As an organisation whose sole purpose is to give a strong and powerful voice to people who often go unheard, the Equality Act serves as the minimum for our work. We believe that everyone should have a fair and equal experience using health and social care. We recognise that some people and communities face compounding layers of disadvantage and discrimination, and we will ensure that our approach reflects the multiple inequalities that people face. We will work to prevent and challenge discrimination and inequality in all our functions.

4. Legislative background

- 4.1. The Equality Act 2010 requires Healthwatch to not discriminate against, harass or victimise actual or prospective employees or users of our services on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 4.2. The Equality Act 2010 sets out a proactive duty on us to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations.

4.3. Under the Equality Act 2010, the relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
- Religion or belief (or no belief)
- Gender (men, women, other)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership (only concerning eliminating discrimination)
- Caring responsibilities

4.4. We understand that some people fall into multiple categories and therefore may well experience intersecting levels of inequality. In addition, we also recognise that socioeconomic factors have an extensive impact on people's experience of health and social care, and we will consider this in how we approach our programme of work.

4.5. The Act also imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled actual and prospective employees and users of its services where appropriate. We extend this protection to our volunteers. For actual and prospective employees and volunteers, marriage and civil partnership is also a protected characteristic.

5. Procedures

5.1. Healthwatch will ensure that the appropriate statutory and advisory guidance is made available to all employees and volunteers who are involved in:

- the recruitment, selecting, induction, training and managing of employees and volunteers.
- designing projects.
- promoting and advertising Healthwatch services.

5.2. Employees and volunteers will receive training, guidance and support in diversity and equity, as appropriate. This will include non-discriminatory practice.

5.3. All employees and volunteers will be given a copy of this policy during their induction period. Members of the public will be given a copy on request.

- 5.4. Healthwatch will collect, collate, and analyse statistics relating to diversity for all applicants for voluntary and paid work, and all users of Healthwatch services, where appropriate and practicable.

6. Policy and influencing

- 6.1. We will ensure that the promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion is reflected in all our policy development and influencing work. It will play a key role in helping set out policy influencing priorities for the year. Each individual proactive and reactive project will always be explored through an equalities lens to ensure that we deliver real world impact in showing how excluded communities experience health and social care.
- 6.2. We will analyse our evidence to identify issues that may disproportionately affect people with protected characteristics and create or perpetuate inequity. These will help us narrow down specific activities throughout the year and develop concrete and actionable recommendations for the sector.
- 6.3. We will work with partners to understand the evidence we gather in more detail and create a strong voice together to extend and enhance our influence.
- 6.4. Our reactive work will also have an equity, diversity, and inclusion focus. We will continually encourage the health and care system to have this focus. We will horizon scan to identify issues or proposed changes to the health and social care system that may adversely affect communities we don't always hear from. When we identify changes that are likely to affect specific groups, we will promote Healthwatch as a potential avenue for helping the system engage with these groups. Where we see decisions being made across the sector which we think will create new or compound existing inequity we will not be afraid to offer public challenge.

7. Research and Insight

- 7.1. We will work to eliminate any data bias from our evidence base to ensure that our policy positions and influencing campaigns are drawn from insight which reflects how disadvantage and discrimination affect people's experience of health and social care.
- 7.2. We will continue to identify equity, diversity, and inclusion gaps in our data and access other data sources or undertake a specific engagement to fill them, to ensure that we are building awareness of the needs of as many different communities as possible. We will continue to help enhance the skills and capabilities of the Healthwatch network through our research support service, ensuring that they can effectively engage as many different communities as possible.

8. Working with others

- 8.1. We will provide support to local Healthwatch in understanding their duties under the Equality Act 2010. We will seek to equip the network with the necessary skills and

confidence to challenge local systems to improve their approach on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to carry out engagement that will put these issues on the table with local decision-makers. We will embed equity, diversity, and inclusion across all our workstreams, which includes:

- Caring responsibilities
- Volunteering
- Business support
- Providing a quality service
- Delivering with impact
- Effective collaboration
- Learning and development

8.2. We will share examples of best practice to facilitate learning from high-quality work on Equity, diversion, and inclusion that is being delivered by local Healthwatch.

9. As an employer

9.1. We will foster a workforce culture that promotes and embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion, and we recognise that everyone adds value to a team. We know our strength comes from building on and valuing our people's differences as well as their similarities.

9.2. By being inclusive we encourage all employees from many different backgrounds to be themselves and apply their own unique perspectives. We recognise that we need to draw on talent from all sections of the population to be innovative, creative, and effective. We are committed to supporting our workforce to develop and deliver good quality work that meets the needs of everyone.

10. How we communicate

10.1. We will ensure that all our communications take account of equity, diversity, and inclusion obligations. Through our approach to communication, we will publicly challenge inequity and discrimination, and ensure that we raise awareness of Healthwatch among a broad range of communities.

10.2. We will provide a platform for seldom heard voices to influence how health and social care services are delivered. We will ensure that our communications engage and support people from every section of the community.

11. Governance

- 11.1. Our Committee will ensure that it is representative of the society it represents. The Committee will scrutinise our work against equity and diversity objectives to ensure that we meet our commitments.

12. Complaints & Non-compliance

- 12.1. Employees and who believe that they have been discriminated against or subject to harassment or victimisation should use the **Grievance Policy** (see Additional Policies section for details).
- 12.2. Members of the public should use the **Complaints Procedure** (see Additional Policies section for details). These procedures do not replace or detract from the right of employees and users of our services to pursue complaints in law under the Equality Act 2010.
- 12.3. Volunteers who believe that they have been discriminated against or subject to harassment or victimisation should use **Volunteer Grievance Procedure** (see Additional Policies section for details).
- 12.4. Any act that contravenes this Policy or its procedures is a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with using the **Disciplinary Policy** (see Additional Policies section for details).
- 12.5. Employees and volunteers should also be made aware that individuals who contravene the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 may be held personally liable should legal action be taken by an aggrieved party.

13. Additional Policies & Documents

All Healthwatch policies and documents referred to in them are available at [Policies](#).

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