



Volunteer Handbook

2026

Guidance and
support for
Healthwatch
Worcestershire
volunteers

www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk

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Welcome from the Chair

Welcome to Healthwatch Worcestershire. I am delighted that you have chosen to give some of your valuable time to Volunteer with us. We truly appreciate the contribution our Volunteers make in supporting the work of Healthwatch Worcestershire and helping to shape and improve health and social care services for everyone.

I hope your time with Healthwatch Worcestershire is both rewarding and enjoyable, and I look forward to meeting you.

With my thanks,

Simon Adams

Chair of Healthwatch Worcestershire

1. Introduction & Purpose of this Handbook

Welcome to Healthwatch Worcestershire (HWW). Our Volunteers are a valued and essential part of our team and play a key role in supporting our work to improve health and social care services across Worcestershire.

This handbook provides information and guidance to support you in your Volunteering role. It explains who we are, how Healthwatch Worcestershire works, what you can expect from Volunteering with us, and what we ask of you in return. It also signposts you to the policies and procedures that apply to all Volunteers and help ensure our work is carried out safely, fairly, and consistently.

Every member of the Healthwatch Worcestershire team is happy to answer questions and provide support.

For any specific queries about your Volunteering role, your first point of contact should be:

Abby Jane - Engagement Officer

Email - abbyjane@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk

Phone - 07767114095

2. About Healthwatch Worcestershire

Healthwatch Worcestershire is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services across the county.

We gather people's views and experiences and use what we hear to influence those who plan, fund, and deliver services. Our role is to ensure that the voices of local people are heard and considered when decisions are made about health and social care.

Healthwatch Worcestershire is part of the national Healthwatch network, established under the **Health and Social Care Act 2012**.

Our statutory role

Our statutory role includes:

- Gathering the views and experiences of local people about health and social care services
- Making reports and recommendations to improve services
- Promoting public involvement in health and social care
- Providing information and signposting to help people access services
- Escalating concerns to Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Healthwatch England is a statutory committee of the independent regulator, the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**. It provides national leadership and ensures that issues raised locally can influence decision-making at a national level.

Its main functions include:

- Providing leadership, guidance, and support to local Healthwatch organisations
- Escalating concerns raised locally to the CQC
- Advising the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, NHS England, and local authorities where services are considered inadequate
- Supporting local Healthwatch organisations without directing or controlling their work

Local Healthwatch

Every local authority with responsibility for delivering social care is required to put arrangements in place for a local Healthwatch.

Local Healthwatch organisations are funded by and accountable to local authorities, while remaining independent in how they carry out their work.

The main functions of Local Healthwatch are to:

- Gather and represent the views of local people
- Share those views with commissioners, providers, and scrutineers of services
- Make recommendations to improve services
- Promote public involvement in health and social care
- Provide information and advice to help people access services
- Share local experiences with Healthwatch England and recommend action where there are concerns

Membership Scheme

Healthwatch Worcestershire is a company limited by guarantee and operates a Membership Scheme in line with its Articles of Association and the Companies Act.

The scheme supports involvement in the governance and development of the organisation.

Membership includes:

- **Healthwatch Volunteers** who play an active role in our work
- **Organisations or 'Experts by Experience'** who are members of the Reference & Engagement Group

Membership means:

- Members can vote at company meetings
- Membership is limited to one place per organisation
- The scheme supports transparency, accountability, and meaningful involvement

Being part of the Membership Scheme is one way Volunteers and partners can help shape the future of Healthwatch Worcestershire.

3. Why Volunteer with Healthwatch Worcestershire?

Volunteering with us offers a meaningful way to make a difference locally while developing your own skills.

Benefits include:

- **Impact & purpose** – helping people have their say and influencing how services are designed and delivered.
- **Skill development** – engagement, research, communication, teamwork, leadership, reporting.
- **Experience & CV** – structured experience in health and social care and community engagement.
- **Flexibility** – roles to suit your interests and availability.
- **Community & connections** – meet new people and build networks.
- **Learning** – access to free e-learning and role-specific training.
- **Progression** – opportunities to explore specialist roles (optional).

4. The Role of Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in helping Healthwatch Worcestershire carry out its work. Volunteers may be involved in a range of activities, including:

- **Community engagement** – talking with local people and gathering experiences
- **Research support** – helping with surveys, interviews, and insight collection
- **Enter and View** – visiting services and observing care (where appropriate)
- **Events and outreach** – attending events and promoting Healthwatch
- **Digital support** – helping with online content and digital surveys
- **Report writing** – supporting the creation or review of reports
- **Admin and office tasks** – assisting with organisation and day-to-day tasks
- **Project support** – helping with ongoing work and activities
- **Representation** – attending meetings or events on behalf of Healthwatch (if applicable)

Not all Volunteers do the same thing. Your role will be discussed with you and agreed based on your interests, skills, availability, and organisational needs.

4. Expectations, Boundaries & Time Commitment

What we expect from Volunteers

All Volunteers are expected to:

- Act professionally, respectfully, and inclusively
- Treat people's experiences with sensitivity and confidentiality
- Work within agreed role boundaries
- Follow Healthwatch Worcestershire policies and guidance
- Raise concerns, questions, or ideas with staff

Time commitment & flexibility

Volunteering with Healthwatch Worcestershire is flexible. Time commitments vary depending on the role and project. We will always discuss expectations with you in advance and aim to support a balance that works for you.

5. Recruitment, Induction & Onboarding

We aim to recruit Volunteers in a fair, inclusive, and transparent way.

The recruitment process may include:

- An application or expression of interest
- An informal discussion
- References
- A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, where required for the role

What happens after you apply

Once you apply, we will contact you to discuss your interests and suitability for roles. You will be kept informed throughout the process.

Induction

All Volunteers receive an induction appropriate to their role. This will cover:

- Healthwatch Worcestershire's role and values
- Your Volunteering role
- Safeguarding responsibilities
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Key policies and procedures (Signing of Volunteer agreement)

6. Training & Development

Training is an important part of Volunteering with Healthwatch Worcestershire.

Online training:

As part of the Healthwatch Network, you will also have access to a range of free online training courses that we encourage you to take part in, to help you develop in your role. These include:

- Equality
- Diversity
- Human rights
- Safeguarding
- Mental health awareness
- Disability awareness

[Click here to visit the training site](#)

Role-specific training

Additional training will be provided where relevant, including Enter and View training.

Refresher training and development opportunities are offered as appropriate. Volunteers also have access to Healthwatch England training and resources.

7. Support, Supervision & Communication

Volunteers are supported by a named member of staff — the Engagement Officer.

For this programme, your Engagement Officer and lead contact is Abby Jane.

You can reach Abby at:

Phone: 07767114095

Email: abbyjane@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk

Support includes:

- Regular communication and updates
- Opportunities to give and receive feedback
- Informal and formal check-ins

We value two-way communication and encourage Volunteers to raise questions, concerns, or ideas at any time.

We're committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. We welcome Volunteers from all backgrounds and will make reasonable adjustments to support accessible, inclusive Volunteering.

Raising concerns:

To raise a concern please contact **Abby - Engagement Officer** first. If your concern involves your named contact or needs escalation, email info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk. We will acknowledge concerns within **5 working days**.

8. Safeguarding, Health & Safety

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. While Healthwatch Worcestershire does not provide direct care services, Volunteers may encounter safeguarding concerns through engagement work.

Volunteers must:

- Report safeguarding concerns promptly
- Not investigate concerns themselves
- Follow Healthwatch Worcestershire safeguarding policy and procedures

The Healthwatch Worcestershire Safeguarding policy for Volunteers will be available on the website for you to read and follow. This document outlines what safeguarding concerns you should look out for and the different forms abuse can take. It also explains the procedure to follow if you have a concern or someone discloses abuse, including who to report it to and how to record it.

Health & safety and lone working

Health and safety guidance will be provided where relevant. Some Volunteering activities may involve lone working. Where this applies, risk assessments and guidance will be shared and must be followed.

9. Data Protection, Confidentiality & Use of Systems

Healthwatch Worcestershire is committed to protecting personal data and confidentiality.

Volunteers must:

- Handle information responsibly
- Follow GDPR and organisational guidance
- Respect confidentiality at all times

IT systems, email, and social media must be used appropriately and in line with policy guidance.

Your data rights

You have rights under UK GDPR, including the right to access your data and request correction or erasure where applicable. For data queries, contact info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk.

10. Code of Conduct, Behaviour & Boundaries

All Volunteers are expected to follow the Healthwatch Worcestershire Code of Conduct, which is based on the **Seven Principles of Public Life**:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

This includes:

- Acting in the public interest
- Avoiding conflicts of interest
- Treating others with respect
- Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries

Handling difficult situations

Volunteers may occasionally encounter challenging situations. You are not expected to manage these alone. Support is always available from staff.

11. Expenses

We do not want Volunteering to cost you money. Healthwatch Worcestershire will reimburse reasonable travel and out-of-pocket expenses that are directly related to your Volunteering activities, in line with our Expenses Policy.

What you can claim

Volunteers can usually claim for:

- Mileage
- Public transport fares
- Parking (not fines)
- Pre-approved purchases
- Other reasonable costs agreed in advance

How to claim

To make an expenses claim:

1. Complete the Volunteer Expense Claim Form

- The form is available on our website.
- A copy will also be emailed to you as a Word/Excel document for you to complete.

2. Attach receipts

- All claims must be supported by receipts, except mileage.
- Mileage will be reimbursed at **55p per mile**, in line with our policy.

3. Submit your form

- Email the completed form and receipts to the Healthwatch office inbox (info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk) or your Engagement Officer.
- If you are unable to email, you may hand in a paper copy to the office.

When to claim:

Please submit claims **within one month** of the expense being incurred. Claims submitted significantly late may not be reimbursed unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

How payment is made

- All reimbursement is processed by **BACS** (bank transfer).
- Please ensure we have your up-to-date bank details (form will be emailed to you)

12. Wellbeing, Recognition & Ending Your Role

Volunteer wellbeing is important to us. Volunteers can step back from Volunteering at any time, temporarily or permanently, and will be supported to do so.

We recognise and thank Volunteers in a range of ways, including during **Volunteers' Week**.

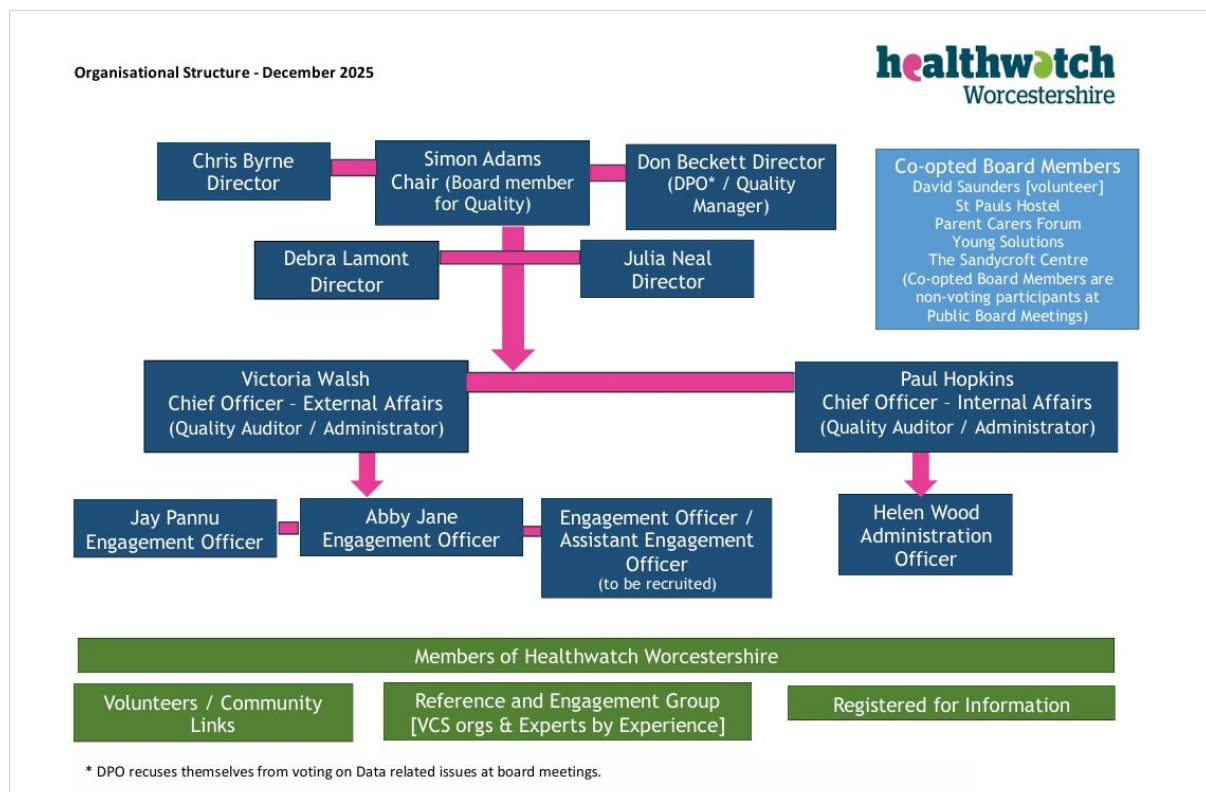
Ending your Volunteering role

When a Volunteering role ends:

- We aim to gather feedback
- Any equipment or materials should be returned
- The relationship will be closed in a positive and respectful way

Staff Organisation Chart

The organisation chart below shows the structure of Healthwatch Worcestershire.



Healthwatch Worcestershire Staff Contacts

Telephone: 01386 550264

General office email: info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk

Address: Healthwatch Worcestershire, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1TP.

Simon Adams Chair (Board member for Quality)	Simonadams@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 01386 565954 07767 114099
Paul Hopkins Chief Officer – Internal Affairs (Quality Auditor / Administrator)	paulhopkins@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 01386 565950 07483 172377
Victoria Walsh Chief Officer – External Affairs (Quality Auditor / Administrator)	victoriawalsh@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 01386 552716 07890 981911
Helen Wood Administration Officer	helenwood@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 01386 579930 07767 114098
Don Beckett Director (DPO / Quality Manager)	donbeckett@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 07974 089433
Chris Byrne Director	chrisbyrne@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 07971 798777
Debbie Lamont Director	debbielamont@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 07890 953926
Julia Neal Director	julianeal@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 07484 922857
Abby Jane Engagement Officer	abbyjane@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 07767114095
Jay Pannu Engagement Officer	jaypannu@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk 07790 771855

Appendix: Policies & Further Guidance

To ensure that Volunteering with Healthwatch Worcestershire is safe, inclusive, and consistent, all Volunteers are required to read and follow the organisation's policies.

You are expected to familiarise yourself with the policies relevant to your role and to ask for guidance if anything is unclear. Support is always available from the Engagement Officer.

Healthwatch Worcestershire Policies

- Volunteer Policy
- Volunteer Agreement
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Retention & Disposal Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Quality Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Relevant Decision Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Childrens Policy

All available via: <https://www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk/our-policies>

- Volunteer Policy
- Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct
- Volunteer BACS authorisation form

