

Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Healthwatch Worcestershire recognises that our staff, volunteers, partners, clients and others we come into contact with and support will come from diverse backgrounds and have the right to be treated with equal respect in an environment that is fair, inclusive and free from discrimination and prejudice.
- 1.2 Diversity and Inclusion is therefore at the heart of Healthwatch Worcestershire's operations and the organisation is committed to being a responsible employer and service provider, actively working to break down stereotypes, to remove artificial barriers and to ensure equality of opportunity for all.
- 1.3 This policy is underpinned by The Equality Act 2010. The Act lists 9 "protected characteristics" as below:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
 - marriage and civil partnership status
- 1.4 Healthwatch Worcestershire will meet and exceed the requirements of the Act and will ensure the organisation and its staff embrace other differences, for example, but not limited to: social status in society, employment status, political beliefs, those with carer responsibilities.
- 1.5 This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers, interns, agency staff and temporary staff. Clients and visitors to Healthwatch Worcestershire are covered by this policy as well as sub-contractors, partners and suppliers.
- 1.6 This policy is not contractual, but is a current statement of Healthwatch Worcestershire's over-arching commitment to Diversity and Inclusion in all policies and procedures affecting relationships and activities with staff and other stakeholders. Healthwatch Worcestershire reserves the right to amend this policy as necessary.

2. Definitions

2.1 Diversity

Diversity is recognising that people are different, both in visible and non-visible ways with individual personal needs, values and beliefs. Working with

diversity means valuing everyone as an individual and understanding that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach does not achieve fairness and equality of opportunity for everyone and therefore processes and approach need to be flexible and inclusive.

2.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is about creating a workplace culture where everyone has a sense of belonging, feels respected for who they are and valued for their individual contribution.

2.3 Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. An example might be rejecting an applicant because they are perceived to be close to retirement (age discrimination).

2.4 Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when an unjustifiable job requirement, rule, policy or condition is stipulated and applied equally to all staff members but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group with a protected characteristic. Such a requirement would need to be objectively justified. An example might be requiring a minimum 10 years experience which would disproportionately impact on applicants younger than 28 years old (age discrimination).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Healthwatch Worcestershire as a Service Provider

Healthwatch Worcestershire recognises that its operations impact on people's lives and communities. Healthwatch Worcestershire, working with its partner agencies, will ensure that the services it delivers will be relevant to local needs and local people and ensure that these services are accessible and appropriate for all sections of those communities.

3.2 Healthwatch Worcestershire as an Employer

Healthwatch Worcestershire is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants. Healthwatch Worcestershire will strive to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills and abilities, free from discrimination or prejudice and in which all decisions are based on merit.

All management actions, including but not limited to recruitment, training, development, career progression, pay, terms and conditions, absence management, performance management, discipline and termination will be

administered in line with the Diversity and Inclusion policy, thereby eliminating discrimination or prejudice.

Managers will lead by example, ensuring that their own behaviour is beyond reproach and that Diversity and Inclusion is regularly discussed at 1-to-1s, team meetings and appraisals. Managers will ensure appropriate diversity training is provided to all staff as part of induction, ongoing and where specific further training needs are identified. Managers will encourage people to be themselves and support them to achieve their individual potential.

Managers will take a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and will proactively and robustly challenge any breach of this policy, where appropriate referring to the Dignity at Work or Disciplinary procedures.

3.3 Responsibilities of staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers are expected to follow the examples set by management in terms of appropriate behaviour and to treat all people they come into contact with through their work with equal respect and without discrimination or prejudice. Staff and volunteers are expected to undertake diversity training as required and to actively challenge any discriminatory behaviour shown by their peers and to raise any concerns with management.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 Healthwatch Worcestershire will carry out a desk-top Equality Impact Screening on all policies and procedures affecting relationships and activities with staff and other stakeholders. Where it is considered that a policy or procedure has the potential for differential impact between groups as a result of their Protected Characteristic, a full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty Act 2010.

5. Recruitment & Selection

- 5.1 Healthwatch Worcestershire will develop a fair and transparent Recruitment and Selection procedure which attracts, recruits and retains the highest quality candidates and embeds the organisation's Diversity and Inclusion principles from the start of employment.
- 5.2 Care will be taken to ensure that Job Descriptions/Role Profiles/Employee Specifications are written based upon essential and objectively justified criteria. Consideration will be given to where vacancies are advertised to ensure all parts of the community are reached.
- 5.3 All candidates will receive fair consideration on the basis of individual merit and no candidate will be unfairly excluded. Candidate selection will be dependent upon a candidate's ability to do the job, based upon their experience, qualifications, past performance and/or potential for the job.

5.4 In order to identify groups that may be under-represented or disadvantaged, Healthwatch Worcestershire will monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information will be removed from applications before short-listing, and kept in an anonymous format solely for monitoring purposes and to help the organisation take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve Diversity and Inclusion.

6. Induction and Training

6.1 All staff will be trained on Diversity and Inclusion as part of their induction and will be required to undertake further training as appropriate.

7. Failure to comply with policy

7.1 Where individuals fail to comply with this policy, in the first instance this will be dealt with by management intervention. In more serious cases, Healthwatch Worcestershire Dignity at Work or Disciplinary procedures will be invoked.

8. Audit and Review

8.1 A review of this policy will take place annually unless legal, contractual, specific business requirements, operational changes or events necessitate an earlier review.

8.2 This policy will be subject to Equality Impact Assessment under the Public Sector Equality Duty Act 2010.