

## Code of Conduct

Healthwatch Sunderland has a duty to protect its good name and reputation. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out the standards of behaviour expected of all staff and volunteers of Healthwatch Sunderland and those acting on behalf of Healthwatch Sunderland to ensure that anyone who comes into contact with one of our representatives is treated in accordance with this Code of Conduct.

### 1. Scope of this Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to anyone involved in Healthwatch Sunderland's activities including all volunteers, staff and those providing services or support on Healthwatch Sunderland's behalf.

### 2. Why Healthwatch Sunderland has a Code of Conduct

Our aim is to create a positive environment within which individuals and organisations with an interest in our work can contribute freely, equally and openly.

To achieve this we need to ensure that:

- Contributions from individuals and organisations with an interest or stake in our work are treated with respect and courtesy.
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct are tackled consistently and fairly.
- The Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life are applied to all aspects of Healthwatch Sunderland's activity.

### 3. The Nolan Principles of Public Life

Healthwatch Sunderland expects all members and those acting on behalf of Healthwatch to be committed to the following principles and behaviours:

## Respect

Respect and uphold the good reputation of Healthwatch Sunderland and treat everyone they come into contact with through Healthwatch Sunderland with equal respect and courtesy.

## Openness and accountability

Conduct themselves fairly and openly when involved in Healthwatch Sunderland's activities and be accountable to Healthwatch Sunderland for any decisions and actions taken on behalf of Healthwatch Sunderland.

## Honesty

Conduct themselves honestly and withdraw from involvement in any business of Healthwatch Sunderland, where they have, or could be seen to have, a conflict of interest, whether personal, professional, financial or other. In particular, make known any interest in any matter under consideration by Healthwatch Sunderland which

- Either creates a real danger of bias - that is, the interest affects him/her, or a member of his/her organisation or household, more than others affected by the decision;
- Or which might reasonably cause others to think it could influence the decision.

In the above situation, they should declare the nature of the interest and withdraw from a meeting or discussion, unless the remaining members agree otherwise.

## Best interests and objectivity

Act in the best interests of Healthwatch Sunderland at all times, taking any decisions on merit and promoting public confidence in Healthwatch Sunderland. When speaking on behalf of Healthwatch Sunderland, accurately represent the collective views of those they are representing on behalf of Healthwatch Sunderland, and provide timely and accurate feedback to Healthwatch Sunderland and those they are representing.

## Integrity

Conduct themselves in a manner which does not damage or undermine the good reputation of Healthwatch Sunderland or place them under any financial or other obligation to any person or organisation that may attempt to influence any decision or action taken on behalf of Healthwatch Sunderland.

## Leadership

Lead by example, supporting these principles in order to maintain and strengthen public trust and confidence in the business of Healthwatch Sunderland.

### 4. Equality and diversity

Healthwatch Sunderland is committed to understanding, accepting and appreciating individual difference. In practice, this means treating others with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual and their experience. Healthwatch Sunderland will not tolerate discrimination against others based on (but not limited to) age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

### 5. Representing Healthwatch Sunderland

All roles which involve representing the interests of Healthwatch (and its members) will be agreed by the Healthwatch Executive Board or Healthwatch Lead Officer as appropriate. These roles include a requirement to represent the best interests of Healthwatch Sunderland within the Nolan Principles (above) and to provide feedback to Healthwatch Sunderland and others in a timely and structured way. When speaking or acting on behalf of Healthwatch Sunderland, representatives will reflect the priorities and policies of Healthwatch Sunderland, even if they differ from personal views. Approaches to staff and volunteers by third parties for Healthwatch Sunderland information or views (including contact with the media) must be referred to the Healthwatch Lead Officer or the Chair of the Board.

## **6. Confidentiality**

Those involved in Healthwatch Sunderland's activities will respect confidentiality and not divulge third party information without the agreement of the third party, a Healthwatch Lead Officer or the Chair of the Board and operate in line with Pioneering Care Partnership's Confidentiality Policy.

## **7. Complaints, comments and concerns about Healthwatch Sunderland**

Healthwatch Sunderland will respond to any complaints, comments and concerns in a timely and consistent way, in line with its published policy.

## **8. Participation in Healthwatch Sunderland meetings and other activities**

Healthwatch Sunderland representatives agree to:

- Attend on time and be prepared
- Send apologies if unable to attend
- Listen to, respect and value the opinions of others
- Speak one at a time, through the Chair or meeting facilitator
- Be clear and keep to the point, using plain English and avoiding jargon and acronyms
- Ask for more information or explanation, if necessary
- Declare an interest where one exists or may be perceived to exist
- Work positively with Healthwatch staff and representatives
- Provide feedback to those they represent
- Respect the authority of the role of the Chair or meeting facilitator and accept a majority vote, where needed, as decisive

## **9. Sanctions**

Breaches of this Code of Conduct will be handled by Healthwatch Sunderland's Chair and Executive Board with support and advice where required from Pioneering Care Partnership. The following sanctions are available to the Executive Board:

- Informal warning
- Formal warning
- Suspension from some or all Healthwatch Sunderland's activities

Breaches of this Code of Conduct by staff and those providing support and services to Healthwatch via a formal arrangement with Pioneering Care Partnership will be dealt with through Pioneering Care Partnership's policies and procedures.

Date approved: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023