

Code of conduct policy

September 2021

Code of conduct policy

Policy statement

This code of conduct sets out the expectations ECS has of all those who work or carry out activities for it delivering Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire, in a voluntary or paid capacity, including Advisory Board Members, employees, students and volunteers. For ease of reference, these parties will be called representatives throughout the rest of the document.

Everyone who represents Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is expected to behave professionally and in support of our values outlined below.

Our values

- We work with people and give people a voice. We respect and empower local people to have their voices heard on issues relating to health and social care.
- We treat all those who contact us with respect and dignity. We value equality, diversity and inclusion and work to make sure that all communities in Leicester and Leicestershire are represented in our work.
- We work with everyone in an empathetic, confidential, and non-judgemental way.
- Our work is evidence-based and collaborative. We work closely with other organisations which share our values. We focus on outcomes to create impact and use our powers to influence how services are planned and delivered.
- We are independent. We scrutinise and challenge decisions to seek out positive outcomes.
- We are open and transparent, and we are accountable to the community. We listen, seek connections, start conversations, build relationships and partnerships, and take part in our community.

Compliance with law

All those who represent Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire are required to abide by relevant laws and regulations, including those relating to the environment, health and safety, discrimination, disability, and employment. Representatives will be ethical and responsible whenever dealing with company finances, the services we deliver, partnership and collaborative working and public image. Representatives will inform the Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire Chair or Chief Officer immediately of any possible or actual infringement.

Conflict of interest

Representatives will complete a declaration of interest form when they join Healthwatch, and ensure it is kept up to date. Representatives are expected to maintain professional boundaries in their relationships with each other, and external parties such as commissioners and providers. Full details can be found in our **Conflict of Interest policy**.

Serving the public

Representatives will always perform their duties to the highest standard and treat members of the public with dignity and respect, taking account of their individual needs. Representatives will actively promote equality, diversity and social inclusion and encourage all the community to participate in engagement activities. Representatives will be honest and impartial when conducting Healthwatch activity, regardless of personal views and will discuss any conflict with

the appropriate line manager or Volunteer Coordinator. ECS delivering Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is a politically neutral and independent organisation.

Use of public funds

As contract holder, ECS has a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public money and proper care of assets which have been publicly funded. ECS Non- Executive Directors will carry out these obligations responsibly and take appropriate measures to ensure that Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire uses resources efficiently, economically, and effectively, avoiding waste and extravagance. The Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire Board will have oversight of the finances to provide assurance the funds are managed responsibly and appropriately and will have regular finance updates on the accounts.

Respect in the workplace

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. Use of technology for virtual meetings and events will also be regarded as ‘the workplace’. We will not allow any kind of discriminatory behaviour, harassment, or victimisation.

Representing Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire

Staff and volunteers including board members are accountable to the public for their actions and the way they carry out their responsibilities. They should always behave in a manner which does not bring Healthwatch into disrepute or damage our relationship with the public, service providers or other stakeholders. Representatives must be respectful and offer constructive criticism which does not seek to undermine an individual.

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire board members are expected to understand and respect the principle of collective decision making and abide by Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire Decision **Making policy**. When a decision is made, all Board members are bound by that decision and should publicly support it.

Where representatives of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire attend meetings whether in person or virtual means, they will provide feedback in a timely and structured manner. When speaking on behalf of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire, representatives will reflect the priorities and policies of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire, even if they differ from personal views. If they are there in a personal capacity or a capacity connected with another role they undertake, they should always be explicit if they are expressing their own personal views. When participating in meetings or other activities, in person or online, Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire 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 the use of 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 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

Approaches to representatives by third parties for information or views, including contact with the media must be referred to the Chief Office or Chair of the Board. In respect of media communications, the Chief Officer and Chair will be the official spokespeople of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire, and no other staff or volunteer should commit to media interviews without first consulting and gaining the approval of the Chief Officer or Chair.

All staff and volunteers must be politically impartial in their public role. Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire will sometimes initiate or participate in campaigning about an issue. Care must be taken to ensure that, in doing so, the principle of political neutrality is always maintained and that nothing is done that could be interpreted as partisan in nature or suggests support for a specific party-political view.

Duty of confidentiality

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire will sometimes receive information which is not in the public domain, often relating to individuals, organisations, or financial matters. Representatives of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire will respect confidentiality and not divulge third party information without the agreement of the third party, or a legal requirement to do so, and operate according to our **Confidentiality policy**.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

We are 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. We 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, in accordance with our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy**.

Gifts and hospitality

It is not normally acceptable for representatives of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire to accept a gift, reward, or favour from others for work done in an official capacity. This does not include gifts of minor value such as pens or calendars.

If gifts are offered, your Line Manager, Volunteer Coordinator or Chair must be informed, and will determine the action to be taken. Your Gifts and Hospitality Register must be completed.

Alcohol, substance misuse and smoking

Smoking is not permitted on Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire (or any other ECS premises), or within the premises where Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire work is being undertaken.

Consumption of alcohol is not permitted during working hours. Representatives of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire must not be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other substances during working hours.

Incapacity for work through the misuse of drink, drugs or other substances is a disciplinary matter for staff and will be addressed through the problem-solving process for volunteers. Where representatives are prescribed medication that may affect their mood or ability to carry out their role, they should bring this to the attention of their line manager or volunteer coordinator.

Dress code

All representatives of Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire should be neat and tidy in appearance and dress in a way that inspires confidence in a professional service.

Reporting misconduct

If any employee or volunteer has a question or concern, or feels that an employee, volunteer, or the organisation is not meeting the commitment outlined in this document, do not stay silent. Contact your Line Manager, Chief Officer, Volunteer Coordinator, Board Member or Chair. If the concern remains unresolved, reference should be made to our **Grievance procedure**, the problem-solving process for volunteers, or our **Whistleblowing policy**.

Members of the public who wish to report a breach in our code of conduct can raise the concern directly with the Chair or Chief Officer. Alternatively, if it is more appropriate, they can raise a complaint in accordance with our **Complaints policy** which is also available on our website, and upon request from any member of our team.

We take our Code of Conduct seriously and expect the same of our employees and volunteers.

Failure to comply

Breaches of our code of conduct will be treated consistently and fairly by the ECS Managing Director.

Failure to comply with the principles and underlying policies in this document may result in disciplinary action for paid employees which can include termination of employment, or commencing the problem-solving process for volunteers, which can include termination of the volunteer agreement and relationship.

Data protection

Any personal information provided in connection with this policy will be processed in accordance with data protection principles and will only be processed to ensure that individuals act in the best interests of ECS. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

Review of policy document

The Board of ECS will review the effectiveness of the code of conduct policy set out in this document every 12 months.

The amended policy document will be published on all ECS Healthwatch websites as soon as is practicable.

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