

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Aims of the Policy

Healthwatch Rutland recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential.

Healthwatch Rutland will do all it can to ensure it recruits, trains and promotes people based on qualifications, experience and abilities for all roles within the organisation.

This policy is designed to ensure that Healthwatch Rutland complies with its obligations under The Equality Act 2010 and demonstrates a commitment to treating people equally and fairly.

Healthwatch Rutland is unreservedly opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation (defined as Protected Characteristics).

Using fair and objective employment practices, Healthwatch Rutland aims to ensure that:

- All employees/volunteers and potential employees/volunteers are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- All employees/volunteers have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from other employees/volunteers or third parties outside of Healthwatch Rutland.
- All employees/volunteers have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.
- All employees/volunteers have the right to be free from discrimination due to their association with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.

In addition, Healthwatch Rutland will ensure that no one involved with it is discriminated against, or treated unfairly. Therefore, this policy applies to all Healthwatch Rutland employee/volunteer interaction with:

- Healthwatch Rutland Members
- Service users and suppliers
- Visitors
- Partner Organisations
- Funding Bodies
- Members of the Public

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to Staff (paid), Volunteers and Board Members. This policy applies to all stages of employment including recruitment and selection, promotion and training. In addition, it applies to the treatment of Healthwatch Rutland Members, Service users and suppliers, Visitors, Partner Organisations, Funding Bodies and Members of the Public.

3. Policy statement

All involved or associated with Healthwatch Rutland commit to:

- Contribute to an environment that is without discrimination, accessible, welcoming and free of harassment, victimisation and bullying.
- Demonstrate and share their commitment to valuing equality and diversity and to develop attitudes and behaviour that support this.
- Challenge what they consider to be unacceptable behaviour, being pro-active with regard to diversity.
- Identify their own learning and development needs on equality and diversity issues and undertake relevant training to maintain and improve their knowledge and contribute to the learning and developments of others.
- Consider what may be of offence to somebody else.
- Not tolerate exploitation of position within the organisation.
- Not make subjective judgements on ability and future potential.

4. Responsibilities

Employees and volunteers (including Board members) of Healthwatch Rutland have a duty to act within this policy, ensure it is followed and to draw attention to any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.

Responsibility for promoting awareness of this policy and monitoring that it is being followed rests with the Board of Healthwatch Rutland, with day to day management of this policy delegated to the Chief Executive Officer.

5. Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy by employees

Breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

6. Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy by volunteers (including Board members) - as per Code of Conduct

Employees, volunteers and Board Members are also personally liable under equality legislation for any act of unlawful discrimination. In carrying out the policy, Healthwatch Rutland will ensure appropriate training is in place and accessed as required. There will be regular audits through management mechanisms such as Supervision and Appraisal.

7. Communications

Communication of the policy to job applicants and employees/volunteers will be done through the recruitment process induction and training. The policy will be publicly available on the Healthwatch Rutland website.

8. Working with Partners

In selecting our partners, we will consider their commitment to Equality and Diversity.

9. Monitoring the Policy

This policy will be monitored to judge to what extent it is working and identify areas for improvement.

Monitoring will relate to all employees, volunteers and to service users.

10. Reporting discrimination / potential discrimination

Employees who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through the Chair of Healthwatch Rutland.

Volunteers who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should initially raise the issue through the management structure (firstly to the CEO, or if the issue is with the CEO, to the Chair or any Board Member).

If an employee/volunteer witnesses behaviour that they find offensive in relation to age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation, even if it is not directed at them, they should also use this procedure.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as necessary, by the Board to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of Healthwatch Rutland.

The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.

Revision History

V2.1 published November 2017 includes reference to the relevant legislation and also that the policy includes how it applies to the treatment of Healthwatch Rutland Members, Service users and suppliers, Visitors, Partner Organisations, Funding Bodies and Members of the Public.