

Equality and Diversity Policy

Purpose of this Document

Healthwatch Hackney acts as outlet for the Hackney residents to voice their opinions on the health and social care services in their community. As a community focused body, it is imperative that Healthwatch is committed to ensuring and promoting Equality and Diversity to all within its reach.

All staff, volunteers, members, and service users are held to this the same commitment of non-discrimination in all its forms, as outlined in this document. The policies found here are non-contractual and will be reviewed and updated along with new developments in Equality and Diversity best practices.

The Definition of Equality and Diversity

1. Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation.
2. Diversity can be described as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for Healthwatch Hackney.
3. Equality and Diversity are not inter-changeable but inter-dependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed and taken account of.
4. The ideals and responsibilities discussed in this policy applies

Scope to all Healthwatch Hackney staff members, board members, volunteers, contractors of employment, and services users.

These persons will not be discriminated against, nor will they be subjected to discrimination, across any facet of Healthwatch Hackney and its related programmes and policies. Discrimination on any level or any grounds is unacceptable, particularly the following 'Protected Characteristics', defined by the Equality Act of 2010:

- Age
- Disability (including mental health)
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership Status
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex or Gender
- Sexual Orientation

Aim

At Healthwatch Hackney we want to ensure a safe, comfortable environment for all. With the assurance that Healthwatch Hackney associated groups will operate in a non-discriminatory manner we aim to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Recognize the worth, talent and potential of all people
- Facilitate an environment of acceptance and communication
- Be aware of any Equality and Diversity issues, barriers, and bias
- Take action in accordance with these guidelines

Healthwatch Hackney recognizes discrimination in all forms, in particular those defined below:

- Direct Discrimination: different, usually less favourable, treatment of a person due to the presence of a protected characteristic, or group of Protected Characteristics
- Associative Discrimination: type of direct discrimination where a person is treated differently because they associate with a person who has a Protected Characteristic
- Perceptive Discrimination: type of direct discrimination where others treat a person differently because they think a person has a Protected Characteristic, applicable regardless of the actual presence of the characteristic
- Indirect Discrimination: any type of condition, rule, or policy which applies to all but particularly affects those with a Protected Characteristic, usually in a negative way, disadvantaging them; occurring regardless of intent harassment: unwanted conduct or attention, inciting discomfort or fear, particularly in regards to a Protected Characteristic; extending to interactions which may offend a third party.
- Victimisation: negative treatment of persons because they have made a complaint, or supported a complaint, in accordance with the ideals laid out in this policy; not including false complaints or those made with malicious intent

Responsibilities

On the individual level each staff member, volunteer, service user, individual board member, or other contracting employee at Healthwatch Hackney is, first and foremost, responsible to monitor their own conduct in adherence to this policy. Key features of conduct being a commitment to...

- Cooperation and Communication
- Facilitating a safe and comfortable environment for all
- Participation in Equality and Diversity training
- Reporting, and informing the proper body of Equality and Diversity concerns and breaches

Healthwatch Hackney Board undertakes the role as the action taking body, with the responsibility of acting on behalf of this policy. This responsibility demands the following action:

- Investigate any and all complaints, or breaches to the Equality and Diversity policy
- Act on any legitimate complaints or breaches to the Equality and Diversity policy
- Maintain records of complaints and discrimination incidences

- Ensure all new policy is created with adherence to the Equality and Diversity policy
- Revision of current policies to meet requirements of the Equality and Diversity policy

Employment Practices

As an employer Healthwatch Hackney will promote equality and diversity, and will not discriminate on any grounds, particularly those considered and defined as Protected Characteristics. Healthwatch Hackney will ensure that no applicant receives unjustifiably unfavourable treatment or opportunity; continuing to the promotion and advertising of employment opportunities. Healthwatch Hackney will hold employment proceedings up for review and address any areas of concern.

Employee misconduct and breaches of the ideals in this policy are grounds for disciplinary offences, as determined by the Healthwatch Hackney Board.

Complaints

Complaints on the grounds of discrimination of any type, at any level will be reviewed, addressed, and taken seriously by Healthwatch Hackney. Responses to complaints will be prompt and discreet, and occur with regard to all other Healthwatch Hackney policy. No individual will be victimized for making a complaint, nor will any person be subject to disciplinary action on the basis of a complaint without investigation into the specific incident.