

Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

This document relates to the operation of Healthwatch Northumberland. Issues of recruitment are the responsibility of and subject to the Equal Opportunities Policy of Adapt North East.

1. Policy

Healthwatch Northumberland strives to ensure that we apply best practice in meeting diverse needs and in complying with relevant legislation to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by the way Healthwatch Northumberland works.

Our view is that Healthwatch Northumberland is not subject to the specific duties set out in the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. However, we are subject to the general equality duty that requires us to have due regard to the relevant statutory needs in our work.

Having due regard means that we need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act)

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

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1. Policy

Healthwatch Northumberland (HWN) strives to ensure that we apply best practice in meeting diverse needs and in complying with relevant legislation to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by the way HWN works.

Our view is that HWN is not subject to the specific duties set out in the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. However, we are subject to the general equality duty that requires us to have due regard to the relevant statutory needs in our work.

Having due regard means that we need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act)

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Protected characteristics are:

Age

Disability
Gender Reassignment
Pregnancy And Maternity
Race
Religion or Belief
Sex
Sexual Orientation.

Having due regard means that we need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Procedure

HWN provides a way for the people of Northumberland and for their voices to influence how health and social care services are planned, purchased and delivered in the county.

HWN commits to:

- Ensure that people's experiences of health and social care services are gathered and used well, including the people whose voices are sometimes not heard or listened to.

- Ensure that people and communities in Northumberland (children, young people and adults) have opportunities to contribute and participate in HWN's activities, including ways that do not require using a computer or mobile phone.
- Identify and highlight good and poor equality and diversity practice in health and social care.
- Challenge examples of discrimination and disadvantage when they arise.
- Value peoples' individuality and respect differences.
- Seek to recruit, develop, and support a diverse team that can effectively work with and for the people of the county.
- Ensure that its Board, staff and volunteers are aware of and apply this policy.

HWN's communications will:

- Avoid jargon and use 'plain English' in all documents and electronic communications
- Avoid sexist, racist or ageist language or other offensive language
- Use images that show a range of people and situations
- Consider the needs of residents whose first language is not English or who are unable to read written material in English
- Proactively distribute information about HWN to groups and locations who may not otherwise receive it
- Encourage people to sign up to receive regular information from HWN in a way they prefer where possible
- Support community and concern groups to pass on information about HWN to their members

HWN will engage with diverse groups and individuals by:

- Visiting community and concern groups where they meet

- Working with and enabling community or voluntary groups to facilitate engagement around specific issues on our behalf
- Providing ways for people to contact us that do not need computers, mobile phones or involve excess cost
- Providing information about HWN in venues used by different groups
- Recruiting volunteers from different groups and communities to publicise HWN
- Ensuring that, where possible, HWN organised events are fully accessible including supporting people's communication needs
- Monitoring information about who returns information, and where from, to identify groups of people who are not reporting concerns to HWN to inform future communication and engagement

Decision making

- HWN will consider the impact of its decisions on protected groups in accordance with its established procedures.
- People interacting with HWN will be invited to volunteer information relating to their ethnicity and/or their protected status. HWN will use this information to help monitor the effectiveness of this policy and ultimately how HWN works.

3. Equalities Impact Assessment

When taking decisions about organisational priorities and work programmes the Board will consider the impact its decisions may have on protected persons and ensure that they are not inadvertently disadvantaged. Similarly, the staff of HWN will review proposed communications to ensure that protected persons are not disadvantaged.

The following questions can be used as a guide:

- Does the policy, activity or communication help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation

- Is the policy or communication likely to treat anyone less favourably or disadvantage anyone because of the protected characteristics?
- How have the needs of those who do not use digital forms of communications been addressed?
- Could it lead to different outcomes for different groups?
- Does the policy, activity or communication advance equality of opportunity?
- Will the needs of people with different protected characteristics be met?
- Could the policy, activity or communication encourage increased take-up or participation by any protected groups?
- Have steps been taken/required to tackle prejudice and promote understanding to promote good relations?
- How have relevant individuals or groups been involved and consulted in developing and assessing this policy?
- How will the success or progress be measured?

The minutes of Board meetings will record an assessment of the equality impact of all decisions taken.

4. Concerns

Anyone who feels that HWN actions or policies impact would be disadvantageous to protected persons should report this to the HWN Board by email to info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk or phone 03332 408468

Date approved May 2025

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