

Policies and procedures

Whistleblowing

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Speak up – we WILL listen

Freedom to speak up means staff and volunteers will feel safe to speak up because speaking up builds on our policies and procedures by aiming to improve openness and commitment to safety and improvement. This means:

- Individuals will be thanked for speaking up (and their experience is such that they will not hesitate to do so again in the future if the need arises)
- All concerns are taken seriously and actioned as appropriate
- Lessons learnt are shared and acted on
- Any lessons will be identified and acted on
- Findings and action taken will be shared
- Outcome will be fair and reasonable (even if not agreed by the individual raising the concern)
- Plans to monitor the situation will be put in place
- There will be confidence that staff and volunteer members regardless of age or gender are safe and the team remains a supportive place to work.

Speaking up about any concern you have at work is really important. In fact, it is vital because it will help us to improve our services. You may feel worried about raising a concern, and we understand this. But please don't be put off. Healthwatch Havering is fully committed to an open and honest culture. We will investigate what you say, and you will always have access to the support you need.

This policy

This policy was a recommendation of the review by Sir Robert Francis into whistleblowing in the NHS, which identified awful experiences of people being met with obstruction, defensiveness and hostility when they tried to raise concerns at work. This policy has been adapted from the standard integrated policy produced by Monitor, the Trust Development Authority and NHS England for hospitals. This policy is being adopted and adapted to suit the needs of by Healthwatch Havering to help ensure a consistent approach to raising concerns.

What concerns can I raise?

You can raise a concern about anything you think is harming the service we deliver. Just a few examples of this might include (but are by no means restricted to):

- unsafe working conditions
- inadequate induction or training for staff
- a bullying culture

If in doubt, please raise it

Don't wait for proof. We would like you to raise the matter while it is still a concern. It doesn't matter if you turn out to be mistaken as long as you are genuinely troubled.

If your concern is a personal complaint about your own employment situation, rather than a concern about malpractice or wrongdoing that affects others, then you may wish to raise this using the

personnel procedures. If your concern is about the conduct of another organisation then our Safeguarding procedures may be the more appropriate procedure

Feel safe to raise your concern

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of reprisal as a result. We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a concern. Nor will we tolerate any attempt to bully you into not raising any such concern. Any such behaviour is a breach of our values as an organisation and, if upheld following investigation, could result in disciplinary action.

Provided you are acting in good faith (effectively this means honestly), it does not matter if you are mistaken or if there is an innocent explanation for your concerns.

Of course, we do not extend this assurance to someone who may maliciously raise a matter they know is untrue.

Confidentiality

We hope you will feel comfortable raising your concern openly, but we also appreciate that you may want to raise it confidentially.

Therefore, we will keep your identity confidential, if that is what you want, unless required to disclose it by law. You can choose to raise your concern anonymously, but that may make it more difficult for us to investigate thoroughly and give you feedback on the outcome.

Who can raise concerns?

Anyone who works in providing services at Healthwatch Havering, including staff, agency workers, temporary workers, students and volunteers, can raise concerns.

Who should I raise my concern with?

In the first instance, you may feel comfortable raising your concern informally with your immediate supervisor, our Community Support Officer, who we hope will be able to resolve it for you.

If this does not resolve matters, or you feel it isn't possible to raise your concerns this way, you can raise it formally by contacting one of the following people whose contact details are available via the Office Manager.

Ian Buckmaster – Director / Company Secretary

Anne-Marie Dean – Director / Chairman

Speak Up Guardian

The local Freedom to Speak Up Guardian can be contactable via the Office Manager.

This is an important role identified in the Freedom to Speak Up review to act as an independent and impartial source of advice to staff, with access to anyone in the organisation, or if necessary, outside the organisation.

All these people have been/will be trained in receiving concerns and will give you information about where you can go for more support.

You can also raise concerns formally with external bodies – London Borough of Havering.

How should I raise my concern?

You can raise your concerns with any of the people listed above in person, by phone or in writing (including email).

Whichever route you choose, please be ready to explain as fully as you can the information and circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

What will we do?

We are committed to listening to our staff and volunteer members, learning lessons and improving our service. On receipt the concern will be recorded, and you will receive an acknowledgement within two working days. The central record will record the date the concern was received, whether you have requested confidentiality, a summary of the concerns and dates when we have given you updates or feedback.

Investigation

We will investigate all concerns – using someone suitably independent (usually a combination of staff and volunteer member)

– and we will reach a conclusion within a reasonable timescale (which we will notify you of). The investigation will be objective and evidence-based and will produce a report that focuses on learning lessons to prevent problems recurring.

Any employment or membership of the board issues identified during the investigation will be kept separate.

Communicating with you

We will always treat you with respect and will thank you for raising your concerns. We will discuss your concerns with you – to ensure we understand exactly what you are worried about. We will tell you how long we expect the investigation to take and keep you up to date with its progress. Wherever possible, we will share the full investigation report with you (while respecting the confidentiality of others).

How will we learn from your concern?

The focus of the investigation will be on improving the service we provide. Where it identifies improvements that can be made, we will track them to ensure necessary changes are made and are working effectively.

Lessons will be shared with the Governance Committee, the Board and may be part of training and development at our Awayday/Training meetings.

Senior management oversight

The Directors will be informed of all concerns raised by our staff and what we are doing to address any problems. The Directors support staff and volunteer members raising concerns and wants you to feel free to speak up.

Making a 'protected disclosure'

To be covered by whistleblowing law when you raise your concern (to be able to claim the protection that accompanies it) you must reasonably believe two things:

1. you are acting in the public interest (so your concern needs to be more than a personal grievance); and
2. your disclosure shows past, present or future wrongdoing that falls into one or more of the following categories:
 - criminal offence
 - failure to comply with a legal obligation
 - a miscarriage of justice
 - danger to the health or safety of any individual
 - damage to the environment and/or
 - covering up the wrongdoing in the above categories

Example process for raising and escalating a concern

Step one If you have a concern about a risk, malpractice or wrongdoing at work, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your immediate supervisor. This may be done face to face, over the phone or in writing.

Step two If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact our local Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

This person has been given special responsibility and training in dealing with whistleblowing concerns. They will:

- treat your concern confidentially unless otherwise agreed ☒
- ensure you receive timely support to progress your concern
- take responsibility to ensure you are not subjected to any detriment for raising your concern
- ensure you receive timely feedback on how your concern is being dealt with
- ensure you have access to personal support since raising your concern may be stressful

If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

What is Healthwatch Havering?

Healthwatch Havering is the local consumer champion for both health and social care in the London Borough of Havering. Our aim is to give local citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided for all individuals locally.

We are an independent organisation, established by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, and employ our own staff and involve lay people/volunteers so that we can become the influential and effective voice of the public.

Healthwatch Havering is a Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee, managed by three part-time directors, including the Chairman and the Company Secretary, supported by two part-time staff, and by volunteers, both from professional health and social care backgrounds and lay people who have an interest in health or social care issues.

Why is this important to you and your family and friends?

Following the public inquiry into the failings at Mid-Staffordshire Hospital, the Francis report reinforced the importance of the voices of patients and their relatives within the health and social care system.

Healthwatch England is the national organisation which enables the collective views of the people who use NHS and social services to influence national policy, advice and guidance.

Healthwatch Havering is your local organisation, enabling you on behalf of yourself, your family and your friends to ensure views and concerns about the local health and social services are understood.

Your contribution is vital in helping to build a picture of where services are doing well and where they need to be improved. This will help and support the Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Services and contractors, and the Local Authority to make sure their services really are designed to meet citizens' needs.

***'You make a living by what you get,
but you make a life by what you give.'***
Winston Churchill

Joining Healthwatch Havering

Local people who have time to spare are welcome to join us as volunteers. We need both people who work in health or social care services, and those who are simply interested in getting the best possible health and social care services for the people of Havering.

Our aim is to develop wide, comprehensive and inclusive involvement in Healthwatch Havering, to allow every individual and organisation of the Havering Community to have a role and a voice at a level they feel appropriate to their personal circumstances.

We are looking for:

Members

This is the key working role. For some, this role will provide an opportunity to help improve an area of health and social care where they, their families or friends have experienced problems or difficulties. Very often a life experience has encouraged people to think about giving something back to the local community or simply personal circumstances now allow individuals to have time to develop themselves. This role will enable people to extend their networks, and can help prepare for college, university or a change in the working life. There is no need for any prior experience in health or social care for this role.

The role provides the face to face contact with the community, listening, helping, signposting, providing advice. It also is part of ensuring the most isolated people within our community have a voice.

Some Members may wish to become **Specialists**, developing and using expertise in a particular area of social care or health services.

Supporters

Participation as a Supporter is open to every citizen and organisation that lives or operates within the London Borough of Havering. Supporters ensure that Healthwatch is rooted in the community and acts with a view to ensure that Healthwatch Havering represents and promotes community involvement in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of health and social services.

Interested? Want to know more?



*Healthwatch Havering is the operating name of
Havering Healthwatch C.I.C.
A community interest company limited by guarantee
Registered in England and Wales
No. 08416383*

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Queen's Court, 9-17 Eastern Road, Romford RM1 3NH
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-  Call us on **01708 303 300**
-  email **enquiries@healthwatchhavering.co.uk**
-  Find us on Twitter at **[@HWHavering](https://twitter.com/HWHavering)**