A role for everyone
A guide to volunteering with Healthwatch Tower Hamlets
What is Healthwatch Tower Hamlets?

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is the independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of the public. We play a role at both a national and local level and will make sure that the views of the public and people who use services are taken into account.

We believe that people who use health and social care services and their experience should be at the heart of the NHS and social care services. That is why we want to find out what local people really think. Through our network of volunteers, we can be the “eyes and ears” of the people of Tower Hamlets.

What we do

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets gives a local voice to children, young people and adults who use health and social care provision in the Borough. We do this through:

Gathering views

We go out and speak to local residents and groups to learn about the health and care needs of communities within the borough.

We undertake targeted work to explore in-depth experiences of specific services.

We tell service providers such as GP Practices, The Royal London Hospital or the Local Authority about your experiences and hold them to account in making improvements.

Information and Signposting

If you need information on health or social care services, we can let you know about it or provide you with the information you need.

We can help put you in touch with advocacy services, who are trained to help you explore choices and options regarding issues such as complaints.

Influencing decision-making

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets has a presence and a voice on the boards and committees that make decisions about how health, public health and social care services are delivered in Tower Hamlets. We also work with stakeholders such as the Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Tower Hamlets Council, NHS Barts Health Trust, regulators, and providers of services, and the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board amongst others.

With our more targeted work on specific services (including our mystery shopping and our Enter and View visits), we write reports with recommendations for improvements. These are submitted to service providers,
commissioners and regulators. By law, these decision makers have to listen and respond to what we have to say.

**Share your feedback nationally**

Individual comments on specific services are added to a national database. *Healthwatch England* use this data to build a national picture of the issues that matter most to consumers and users of health and care services. They use this evidence to influence those who plan and run services at a national level. You can learn more about how Healthwatch England uses its influence [here](#).

**How volunteers help us**

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets structure is based on our being run **BY** rather than **for** or **with** local residents. It depends on attracting, training and retaining a large number of local people who have diverse skills and backgrounds and who are focused on having an impact on commissioning, delivery and community wellbeing.

We need members of the community to be involved by:

- Taking a few minutes to visit our website, phone or pop in to leave feedback and ratings on the Health and Social Care services you have used. These are our Healthwatch members.
- Taking part in workshops and focus groups on key issues that may be of interest such as mental health, young people or diabetes.
- Helping to run information stands in the community and health and social care venues to collect feedback from local people on their experience of health and social care services. These are our outreach volunteers.
- Helping out in the office to input information into our database, or assisting with communications on social media, the website and our newsletter updates.
- Coming with us on the visits we undertake to hospitals, surgeries and other health and social care facilities to talk to patients and staff about how they could be improved. These are our Enter and View Volunteers.
- Leading projects to look at specific areas, such as GP access, or specific groups, such as older people. These are our peer researchers.
- Representing patients on decision making forums or partnership boards.
- Taking key responsibility for the overall business management and performance of the charitable company and for representing the voice of local residents on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Scrutiny Panel of the Council. These are our Board members.

There really is an incredibly wide range of ways that you can get involved with Healthwatch and that is why this document is entitled ‘A Role for Everyone’. If you would like to get involved but don’t know exactly how please feel free to come and chat to us about it.
How volunteering helps you

Our volunteers are key players in enabling us to fulfil our role of championing the users of Health and Social Care Services in Tower Hamlets. Other reasons to volunteer with us include:

- Being able to make a difference in your community.
- Boosting your confidence by learning new skills.
- Improving your employability and gaining experience through working directly with health and social care service providers across Tower Hamlets.
- Meeting new people and becoming part of a friendly team and having fun.
- Doing something interesting with your spare time and in turn, making a noticeable difference to people’s lives.

What we can offer you

We aim to support our volunteers in many ways, such as:

- Induction training package for all volunteers, which includes training on the current health and social care landscape.
- Additional training packages relevant to each individual volunteer role, which include communication for community engagement skills and enter and view training.
- Full re-imbursement for all reasonable expenses (e.g. travel) incurred as a result of volunteering for Healthwatch including lunch if you work more than 4 hours in a day. Regular support from either Healthwatch Tower Hamlets staff or our team of volunteers, who have experience in many different areas and can provide support when needed.

For further information about volunteering with Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, please get in touch with us via contact details below:

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets
Room 23, Block 1 (Trust Offices)
Mile End Hospital
Bancroft Road
London E1 4DG
Office number: 020 8223 8922
Freephone number: 0800 145 5343
Email: info@healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk
Web: www.healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk
Tweet us: @HWTowerhamlets
Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatch-Tower-Hamlets-436763663344717/