



**Healthwatch  
Wolverhampton  
Oversight Group  
Terms of  
Reference**

**March 2025**

## 1. Introduction

This document has been produced as a reference tool for the Healthwatch Wolverhampton Oversight Group for the purposes of information giving, the operational running of the Oversight Group and the establishment and maintenance of good practices. There are many policies and procedures which we use to ensure we deliver the best possible service. The Oversight Group Guide provides further guidance and should be used in conjunction with this document.

## 2. About Healthwatch Wolverhampton

Healthwatch Wolverhampton (HWW) gives citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social services are provided within Wolverhampton. It is set apart from the statutory structures, voluntary and community sector they work within, as they perform public functions, deliver statutory duties and receive public funding. Its core purpose is to make sure that the views of the public shape the health and care services they need. Therefore it is:

- **Independent in purpose** – amplifying the voice and experiences of the most pressing and difficult issues in health and social care.
- **Independent in voice** – speaking up on behalf of sometimes unpopular causes as well as groups who are marginalised and/or face disadvantage or discrimination.
- **Independent in action** – designing and delivering activities that best meet the needs of the people they serve.

If HWW is to hold others to account, it must itself operate with integrity, accountability and transparency to have accountability in the communities it serves.

## 3. Governance, Responsibilities and Authorities of Evolving Communities and the Healthwatch Wolverhampton Oversight Group

The contract to deliver the HWW service is held by Evolving Communities. As contract holder, Evolving Communities has corporate legal responsibility for the delivery of the HWW contract and for the achievement of the Key Performance Indicators agreed with the City of Wolverhampton Council, the local authority issuing the contract. To support Evolving Communities in delivery of the HWW contract, HWW has a local Oversight Group, consisting of members who are representatives from a wide range of community and voluntary organisations. The blend of organisations on the HWW Oversight Group is designed to give voice and influence to the diverse communities of Wolverhampton so that the HWW team can better serve their community. Evolving Communities delegates decision making to the HWW Oversight Group in order to

ensure local determination of priorities for HWW. This empowers HWW to set the strategic direction of their own local workplan.

#### **4. Healthwatch Wolverhampton Oversight Group Responsibilities**

The HWW Oversight Group exists to provide direction, oversight, scrutiny and support to HWW's workplan. In particular, it:

- Identifies key areas of work for HWW.
- Supports the development and delivery of activities.
- Shares information and insight from Wolverhampton's communities to help inform and direct the activities of HWW, avoiding duplication of resources and efforts and representing the voice of the communities they serve.
- Considers and identifies emerging key themes that are pertinent to strategies about, delivery of and access to health and care services in Wolverhampton.
- Offers experience, expertise and knowledge to promote and support HWW.
- Ensures that the activities and resources of the HWW Manager and team are focussed on creating positive impact for the people of Wolverhampton.
- Ensures wider public involvement in the work of HWW.
- Ensures that HWW is fulfilling its legal and statutory obligations.

#### **5. Membership**

The HWW Oversight Group members should be a representative (volunteer, staff member or service user) of an organisation that works with, serves or champions the cause of a community within Wolverhampton. The representative member is a named individual. A minimum of five Oversight Group members, with a minimum quorate of three being necessary to make decisions.

The blend and number of organisations may change over time to reflect the needs and demographics of the population and with particular regard to health inequalities. Potential Oversight Group members will have the opportunity to observe an Oversight Group session before joining. HWW Oversight Group members serve a term of three years from the date of joining the HWW Oversight Group. No individual shall serve more than three consecutive three-year terms without a review to consider reasons for an extension. HWW Oversight Group members shall serve staggered terms to balance continuity with new perspectives. Progression to a second or third term as a HWW Oversight Group member will be agreed by the HWW Manager, HWW Oversight Group Chair and a lead officer in the organisation represented by the individual.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>
City of Wolverhampton Council	
Wolverhampton Homes	
Faith Representative	
Healthwatch Wolverhampton	
Black Country Healthcare	
Voluntary Sector	

## 6. Chairing arrangements

The Oversight Group is led and chaired by an independent chair or co-chairs, recruited by HWW. The Chair is a volunteer and subject to the Volunteering Policies and Processes. In the event of any action required to remove the Chair, an investigation would be led by the CEO of Evolving Communities, with reference to the HWW Oversight Group and staff team as appropriate.

## 7. Number of Oversight Group Sessions

The number of HWW Oversight Group Sessions shall be no fewer than four per year, reflecting the quarterly cycle of contract delivery. There may be additional sessions, including learning and development sessions or public events.

Where: HWW Oversight Group sessions will be held in accessible venues within the City of Wolverhampton Council geographical area. Where face-to-face sessions are not possible, virtual sessions will be held via video technology such as Zoom or Teams.

## 8. Agenda

The agenda will be set by the HWW Oversight Group Chair in collaboration with the HWW Manager, taking account of the suggestions of HWW Oversight Group members. The agenda and supporting papers for each session will be sent to HWW Oversight Group members at least five days in advance of the meeting by email. Paper copies will be made available to members on request and on the day of the session.

## 9. Meetings in Public

Some HWW activities must be open to the public. This is so that the public can scrutinise the key decisions and conclusions of the Oversight Group, namely local determination and accountability. This means that a minimum of two sessions should be public meetings at the times when priorities are set and the previous year is

reviewed/annual report is published (January and July). Should there be confidential matters on the agenda, part of the meeting may be closed to the public to protect that confidentiality. The notice and time of the HWW Oversight Group Meeting will be published at least five days in advance through HWW public communication channels. The agenda, supporting papers and minutes of HWW Oversight Group public meetings will be made available to the public in line with requirements and following Healthwatch England guidance.

## **10. Conflicts of Interest**

Each HWW Oversight Group Member will register their own interests and those of the organisation they represent. Declarations of interest pertinent to the subject matter discussed at any session must be declared during the session.

## **11. Resignation**

Any HWW Oversight Group member may resign at any time. The HWW Chair and HWW Manager will liaise with the relevant organisation to ensure that they can maintain representation of their community of interest.

## **12. Attendance**

HWW Oversight Group members must submit their apologies if they are unable to attend an Oversight Group session. Should any HWW Oversight Group member miss three consecutive Oversight Group sessions, their membership of the Oversight Group will be reviewed with a lead officer in the organisation represented by the individual.

## **13. Decision making**

Decisions made affecting the activities of HWW must be in accordance with the statutory functions of HWW and in accordance with guidance provided by Healthwatch England. They must also be within the resource capabilities of HWW. The HWW Manager and a senior member of staff from Evolving Communities can offer guidance and information to support decision making. Where it is necessary for votes to be cast, then any decision will be based on a majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair will have the casting vote.

## **14. Oversight Group members responsibilities**

- Accept responsibility to ensure that HWW has local determination and accountability in its activities.
- Abide by governance procedures and practices.
- Strive to attend all Oversight Group sessions, giving apologies ahead of time prior to the meeting.
- Study the agenda and other information sent to them in good time prior to the session and be prepared to debate and vote on agenda items during the session.
- Honour the authority of the chair and respect their role as session leader, and in return expect to be treated with respect.
- Engage in debate and vote in sessions according to procedure, maintaining a respectful attitude toward the opinions of others while making effective representation on behalf the community that their organisation serves.
- Accept a majority vote on any issue as decisive and final.
- Maintain confidentiality about any part of an Oversight Group session that is conducted in private, unless authorised to speak of it.
- Be proactive in their role and develop knowledge and skills in order to continually participate as an active Oversight Group member.

## **15. Enhancing Governance**

- Participate in induction, training and development sessions for Oversight Group members.
- Continually seek ways to improve and share those with the HWW Chair and Manager.
- Support the HWW Chair and Manager in their roles.

## **16. Leaving the Oversight Group**

- Understand and accept that substantial breach of any part of this code may result in their removal from the Oversight Group.
- Understand that they will be given the opportunity to be heard by the HWW Chair and Manager should any action be taken that may result in their being removed from the Oversight Group.
- If resigning from the Oversight Group, inform the HWW Chair in advance in writing, stating reasons for resigning. Additionally, participate in an exit interview.
- Participate in succession planning through discussions with the organisation they represent along with the HWW Chair and Manager.

## 17. Communications and Media Procedure

Public and media statements are to be given by designated trained personnel only. Statements will be evidence based, factual and aligned to workplan objectives.

### **Who deals with media enquiries?**

Any queries received from the media must be passed immediately to the Communications Lead or in their absence another member of the Senior Management Team. Employees must not attempt to deal with queries themselves. Please note that “no comment” is never appropriate. The Local Healthwatch Board/Oversight Group are not authorised to deal directly with the media, unless asked to provide comment or interview by the Communications Lead or Healthwatch Manager, following a briefing about the enquiry.

## 18. Code of Conduct

The Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles, applies to all those working, volunteering and involved in any role for HWW.

### **Seven (Nolan) Principles of Public life**

- ❖ Selflessness - Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- ❖ Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- ❖ Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- ❖ Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- ❖ Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- ❖ Honesty - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

- ❖ Leadership - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Along with these Seven (Nolan) Principles of Public life Evolving Communities has an organisational Code of Conduct that will be provided to the Chair and all Oversight Group Members. In addition, the Oversight Group Members will agree to and abide by the following, which is in line with Healthwatch England guidance.

### **Law, mission, policies**

- Act within the governing documents of HWW and abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation.
- Not break the law or go against regulations in any respect of their role.
- Support the objects and mission of HWW and act as their champion.
- Develop and maintain an up-to-date knowledge of HWW and its environment.
- Abide by and promote HWW's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

## **19. Review**

Terms will be reviewed, with no longer than three years between reviews.