



# Our social value commitments

Annual update



Committed  
to quality



**healthwatch**  
Brighton and Hove

## Our commitment

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove is committed to delivering social value. Social value (SV) is about making sure that we have a positive impact on our people and communities.

Our SV goes beyond delivering on our core Healthwatch contract requirements, and are the additional community benefits we want to achieve.

As part of our commitment, we routinely review and update our ways of working and also publish an annual report describing actions we have taken or are working on. We also include a summary in our statutory [Annual Report](#).

This is our first update progress report.

**To note.** Our plans for this year have been affected by the [government's proposal](#) to abolish Healthwatch. Currently, we only have certainty about our immediate future until March 2027, and this will affect our long-term plans.

## What we achieved in 2025–2026

We have successfully delivered our Year One plans and have been able to bring forward some of our Year Two ambitions.

### Age and Dementia Friendly Business

This year we worked towards becoming accredited as a [dementia friendly](#) organisation. We attended Brighton and Hove City Council's Age and Dementia Friendly Training and are now registered as an [Age and Dementia Friendly business](#). This means, we:

- 1) are welcoming and friendly.
- 2) offer a seat to rest and toilet if space permits, without needing to spend money.
- 3) ensure our business is accessible.
- 4) have become a Dementia Friend.
- 5) Signpost people to more information.

The Council's training was shared and discussed by the staff team. All Healthwatch employees and many of our volunteers signed up to become [Dementia Friends](#). We also joined the Age and Dementia Friendly Alliance.

## Disability Confident employer

We signed up to the government's [Disability Confident](#) scheme to show our commitment to think differently about disability and take action to improve how we recruit, retain, and develop disabled people. When we recruit, we offer a guaranteed interview to people who declare a disability and meet the minimum criteria. Our offices are fully accessible, and we offer reasonable adjustments to support people. We make job adverts accessible, for example, using straightforward language, avoiding jargon and acronyms, and including an equal opportunities statement. We have policies in place to support people with a disability. Next year, we will embed these commitments.



## Supporting our staff

Our SV outcomes are designed to attract and retain the best employees and volunteers, reduce absenteeism, improve work-life balance, and improve productivity.

We provide a wide range of SV for our employees, including:

- being a Brighton and Hove Real Living Wage [employer](#).
- offering a flexible working environment with full and part time paid roles.
- supporting our employees with their caring responsibilities.
- offering an attractive work package with 5% pension contributions, 28 days annual leave plus additional days off over Christmas.

As part of a package of support:

- We offer a free [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) to support well-being. We reviewed our existing scheme this year, involving staff and our volunteers, and determined that our current programme provides the right level of support. We have extended our EAP for another year.
- We encourage hybrid working, allowing people to work in the office and at home with appropriate equipment provided, including but not limited to laptops, adjustable standing desks, printers, desks, ergonomic chairs,

ergonomic computer. We have provided staff with equipment and encouraged staff to have Workstation Assessments performed to ensure their home working environments protect their well-being and physical health. We offer staff taxable benefits in kind which covers some of their travel costs into the office, so that this does not act as a barrier to someone working for us. We also cover the costs of staff lunches.

- We updated our operational policies this year:
  - to enable our employees to undertake paid local volunteering activities.
  - to extend our offer of a guaranteed interview (subject to meeting minimum criteria) to candidates who are carers, university students and former members of the Armed Forces (next year we will explore signing the [Armed Forces Community Covenant](#)).
- Going forward, when we need to recruit new staff members, we will consider the appropriateness of offering job sharing. We will also aim to target our advertising to reach the groups mentioned above, and to students nearing the end of their studies.

## Supporting our volunteers

- A dedicated Healthwatch staff member leads the recruitment and ongoing support for our volunteers.
- We offer flexible opportunities including short and long-term volunteering roles, the ability to work flexible hours and virtual volunteering (i.e. undertaking telephone calls). We also allow volunteers to pause their activities with us but remain on our books. This year, 44 volunteers supported our work, four paused their activities, and two rejoined us. Nine new volunteers joined Healthwatch Brighton and Hove this year.
- Moving forward, we will analyse our volunteer role descriptions and update these. We capture volunteer equalities data which informs our future recruitment approaches. We have also issued a volunteer satisfaction survey which will help us continually improve our offer.
- To promote volunteering to varied groups we worked towards becoming accredited as a dementia friendly organisation and disability confident employer.

- This year, four Brighton University students joined us as part of their final year placements. BSc Business students are required to complete a consultancy project for a client, as part of a final-year degree assessment. Recognising our ambition to increase awareness of Healthwatch and promote our brand, we work directly with the students to help them design and deliver a promotion plan for Healthwatch Brighton and Hove. During May 2025, the students took over our social media channels and boosted our engagement rates. You can read more about this work [here](#). The students benefited from delivering 'live' project work which will support them to be 'work ready.' We extended our offer to the students to support them with CV writing and interview skills. This was not taken up but we will continue to offer this.
- We updated our recruitment policy this year to offer guaranteed interviews (subject to meeting minimum criteria) to candidates who are final-year university students.
- We held three volunteer appreciation events this year, attended by 23 volunteers. We also delivered three bespoke newsletters showing our volunteers how their contributions support our work as well as keeping them up to date.



## Supporting carers

To support our employees who have caring responsibilities we offer flexible working practices which allow individuals to take paid and unpaid caring leave and to vary their working hours, for example, during school holidays. We have met our target of doing this with 12 weeks of contract start dates but also operate an open-door policy for staff members to discuss changing needs with their line managers.

Our policies include equal opportunities for promotion, career development, and professional growth. We updated our recruitment policies to extend guaranteed interviews to those who are carers (who meet minimum criteria).

Going forward, we will work with the Carers' Centre to provide carers with access to helpful information.

We will continue to explore the appetite amongst staff and volunteers for creating an internal network for carers, where staff and volunteers can connect, share experiences, and offer mutual support.

## Supporting victims of domestic or sexual violence

We have made sure that everyone who works and volunteers for us understands we have a zero-tolerance approach to Domestic Violence. We will do everything we can to protect staff and volunteers and signpost them to relevant frontline support services. We have developed our policies to include one covering Sexual Harassment and our Domestic Violence Policy makes it explicit about protections we offer.

The staff team all completed trauma inform training this year and received in-person training from the Survivors Network on Supporting Survivors. Staff members also completed training on Responding Well to Disclosure.



This year, we joined the [Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#), supporting a network of employers to take effective action on domestic abuse. This supported us to update our policies and procedures and to demonstrate our culture of safety.

Going forward, we will obtain literature and use this to raise wider awareness of Domestic Violence at events we attended or hosted. We will also create a webpage with advice and included this in one of our newsletters.

To demonstrate a culture of safety, a named person will lead delivery of our commitment of supporting staff and volunteers who may be victims of domestic violence.



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