

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Statement on improving our awareness of race, ethnicity and culture, and how we are addressing these in our behaviours and procedures

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is, and has always been, committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. These values underpin all our work and are embedded within our organisation and culture. We strive to ensure we hear from those who are typically seldom heard, and this premise is evident in our corporate strategies and priorities.

As part of our commitment, we have looked inwards to assess whether our organisation is culturally competent and to identify areas where improvements need to be made. We are conscious that we have made recommendations for improving cultural competency to other organisations, and we want to ensure we are holding ourselves to account and to the same standards. In response, we have made some important changes which are listed below.

Building partnerships

Since 2021 we have made strides to build and maintain long term partnerships with local Black and Asian community and faith groups. As we move forward, we will continue to build on these partnerships and to develop new relationships with other ethnically diverse community groups with the aim of rebuilding trust, ensuring their voices and experiences are heard, and ensuring they receive equal and fair treatment. As part of this, we will provide safe spaces for conversations, with the recognition that it is our responsibility to ensure local people feel comfortable and confident to speak to us.

Policies

Healthwatch Hertfordshire has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which can be found [here](#). This policy is regularly reviewed and amended in line with new developments and best practice.

To complement the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, we have produced this document to outline how we are ensuring our organisation is culturally competent.

Language, imagery and communications

Using insight and guidance from Black and Asian community leaders, Healthwatch Hertfordshire will no longer use the terms "BAME" or "ethnic

minorities” in our internal and external communications. With the agreement of Black and Asian community leaders, we will now use the term “ethnically diverse communities” when describing a group of people from non-White backgrounds. The terms “BAME” and “ethnic minorities” will only be used when it is referred to in external policies, strategies and legislation, and is proved to be necessary.

Where possible, specific language will be used when referring to a particular ethnic group, for example, using the term “Black Caribbean” or “Black African” rather than simply “Black”. As above, this is to ensure ethnic groups are not homogenised, but addressed specifically and individually.

Healthwatch Hertfordshire will also ensure the imagery used in external and internal communications reflects and represents the diversity of ethnicities (as well as other protected characteristics) when publishing communications which refer to all ethnicities. As above, when addressing a specific ethnicity, we will use imagery that represents that specific ethnic group.

Training

All Healthwatch Hertfordshire staff and Board members are required to take part in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training. Regular retraining sessions are also mandatory. Board members have also undertaken Unconscious Bias training.

We recognise the importance of ensuring all staff and Board members are aware of, and have a good understanding of, different ethnicities, religions and cultures. We plan to ensure all staff and Board members receive Cultural Competency training by Spring 2023. This training as well as regular retraining sessions will be mandatory.

Training on specific ethnicities will also be offered to staff. Most recently one of our members of staff undertook training on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and the learning was shared with other members of staff working and engaging with the public.

Recruitment processes

In our recruitment processes we use a variety of approaches to ensure we try to reach a broad range of people with protected characteristics, and actively encourage applications from all communities. In our last recruitment of Board members we used targeted approaches to encourage applications from a diverse range of people.

Healthwatch Hertfordshire already operates a “blind” recruitment process, in which no names or protected characteristic information is shared with those shortlisting applications.

Job descriptions and application forms were revised in August 2022 to emphasise our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and our expectations for candidates to hold the same values, and ambition to drive forward this agenda.

Accessibility

Healthwatch Hertfordshire provides information and documentation in an alternative format on request. If documentation needs to be translated or provided in another language, this service will always be offered and we ensure members of the public are aware of this.

Our new website includes the “ReachDeck” feature which enables information on our website to be translated into another language.

Our survey looking at ethnic health inequalities amongst Black and Asian communities was translated into 10 languages. This is a service we will continue to offer if deemed necessary.

Research and engagement

As part of our research looking at ethnic health inequalities amongst Black and Asian communities, we sought guidance and advice from Black and Asian community leaders to ensure our research methodologies and tools were culturally sensitive and appropriate. Going forward, we will continue to seek support and guidance from ethnically diverse communities when devising research and engagement projects to ensure they are culturally competent.

Demographic data

We collect demographic data on our website and through our signposting and research and engagement functions. Although it is requested, sharing of demographic information is optional as we are mindful that this could be sensitive information to some individuals, and we do not want to deter people from contacting us.

Similarly, in certain cases where a person is distressed, it may be inappropriate for us to ask questions about demography or customer satisfaction.