

# Volunteer Authorised Representatives



## Read what it means to our volunteers to work with Healthwatch Staffordshire.

I have been retired now for three years and one of the first things I wanted to do was to do Voluntary work – not as easy as you would imagine! I found Healthwatch to be a very professional organisation that satisfied my needs. As a retired teacher I wanted to use my previous skills – observation, communication, writing reports and meeting people. In addition, Healthwatch offered training and you do feel part of a team and undertaking a worthwhile role in the community. As an Enter and View Volunteer I have learnt not to have pre-conceived ideas. Before entering an establishment I read reports about the Residential Home, which originally influenced my judgement. My experience has shown that the majority of care homes are well run with superb staff. In fact, what you see is a snapshot of the life of a care home on one day. It is apparent very quickly which homes are well run and those which need a little more work, to make them a better environment for the residents. You need to tread carefully but most places welcome your visit and are interested in your feedback. The bottom line when visiting is ‘Would I be happy to be a resident in this establishment, if I could no longer look after myself at home?’ I would highly recommend this volunteer role and there are many more opportunities to do further tasks for Healthwatch.

Julie, Healthwatch Staffordshire Volunteer and Authorised Representative

So, what do I give to Healthwatch? Just a little of my time, and a little thought. And what do I get out of it? A lot. The opportunity to meet, work with, and get to know new people. To visit new places. The chance to meet and talk to care home residents and staff who are too often almost invisible to the outside world. The intellectual stimulation of observing, listening, and recording, and then drafting reports, sometimes making suggestions for improvements. Above all, the feeling that one is contributing to something that can make a positive difference to people’s lives. As an Authorised Representative (AR) on the Enter and View programme, I have now been to a good many care homes and day opportunities centres and have worked with a fair few ARs. Each visit is different, and interesting in its own way. To meet the residents and service users is always enjoyable; to talk to them and the staff and management is sometimes inspirational. Each Authorised Representative also brings their own knowledge and life experience, and we constantly learn from one another. And we know that we can call on the support of the office staff at Healthwatch when we need it. Let us hope that, following the suspension of visits due to the pandemic, the Enter and View programme can soon resume. I for one am missing it.

Will, Healthwatch Staffordshire Volunteer and Authorised Representative