

East Sussex Community Voice

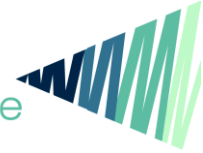
Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy Schedule

Version	Date of next review by ESCV Board	Date of adoption by ESCV Board
1	n/a	September 2020
2	September 2021	September 2021
3	September 2023	
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV) recognises the diverse needs of our communities and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in employment and service delivery. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of our values.
- 1.2 All East Sussex Community Voice, staff, board members and volunteers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and to ensure that no other board member, staff, volunteer or service user receives less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds of a protected characteristic. This policy sets out the basis of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.
- 1.3 East Sussex Community Voice's practices will ensure that staff, board members, volunteers and service users will not be discriminated against on any grounds in respect of 'protected characteristics' as defined in the Equalities Act 2010, including:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Race
 - Sex
 - Religion or cultural beliefs
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marital status and civil partnership
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity



- 1.4 East Sussex Community Voice recognises that not all forms of unreasonable and unfair discrimination are the subject of legislation, and that people may experience discrimination for many additional social, educational and economic reasons. This policy will apply equally to all of these circumstances.
- 1.5 Equality of opportunity and valuing the diversity of staff and volunteers in East Sussex Community Voice is also supported by our Equality and Diversity Statement.

2 Our commitments

- 2.1 East Sussex Community Voice actively ensures that it complies with the current and any forthcoming statutory requirements and standards on equal opportunities. We seek to influence and encourage our partners and contractors to meet their obligations through agreement and contractual arrangements.

We:

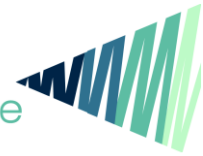
- value the talent, needs and desires of all members of the community
- employ principles of equity and fairness in consultation and community engagement
- promote good relations between all sections of society
- tackle institutional factors and behaviour that inhibit equality of opportunity in employment and the recruitment of volunteers and equitable service delivery.

- 2.2 We aim to develop and maintain a workforce and volunteer base with a broad range of skills and experience that reflect the needs and interests of our community. Our policies are designed to ensure that we make the most of the diverse experiences, skills and talents of everyone living and working in East Sussex.

3 Positive Action

- 3.1 East Sussex Community Voice believes that passive support for equal opportunities is not enough and that positive pro-active steps shall be taken to embed this within the operation of the organisation.

We are organisationally committed to:



- Recognising and developing potential which has not been used before because of past discrimination and disadvantage
- Encouraging access and applications for staff and volunteer positions from under-represented groups
- Providing training and support for disadvantaged groups and individuals to fully participate in our work

3.2 East Sussex Community Voice aims to deliver services throughout East Sussex for the whole population and every service user will be treated in a professional manner, with courtesy and respect. We will reference our commitment to our Equal Opportunity Policy in project proposals, reports and our communications so that:

- Users of our services and those we engage with will know this policy exists, and a copy is available via our website to guide all members of the organisation and others to share the commitment to equality and diversity
- All who engage with East Sussex Community Voice will know the values we stand by and the standards that we are trying to achieve and can assist us in trying to achieve them
- They will know they have the right to complain; if they feel these standards are not being adhered to or are dissatisfied with the service provided to them

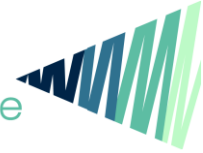
3.3 All activities and decisions made by East Sussex Community Voice will be assessed for their impact on those with protected characteristics by conducting appropriate and proportionate Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). Where there is evidence that particular groups may or will be negatively affected by a decision, action will be taken to address this.

3.4 Guidance on Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) is available from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission [website](#).

4 Forms of Discrimination

4.1 East Sussex Community Voice's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice relates to all kinds of discrimination, as set out below:

- **Direct discrimination** - occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above (see 1.3).
- **Indirect discrimination** - occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. This



applies even if there was not a deliberate intention to discriminate.

- **Perceptive discrimination** - direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic even if they do not possess that characteristic.
- **Harassment** - is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This applies even if the conduct is not directed at the individual or if they do not have the protected characteristic.
- **Third party harassment** - potential liability for the harassment of staff by others such as contractors or service users.
- **Victimisation** - is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment or supported someone else's complaint.

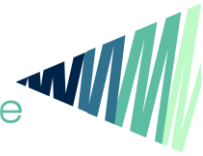
5 Communications

5.1 All East Sussex Community Voice communications material will be made available on request in alternative formats (such as other languages, Braille, Easy-Read versions and other formats).

5.2 East Sussex Community Voice will develop services and initiatives that are inclusive, focusing particularly on those groups facing disadvantage and discrimination by:

- Providing information in plain English and using methods other than written documents to present information as appropriate
- Offering information in accessible formats, including spoken community languages, large print and on the internet
- Providing interpretation, translation and sign language services as appropriate
- Using imagery in public spaces and providing literature that reflects the diversity of the community, such as ethnicity, sexuality etc.

5.3 East Sussex Community Voice Board staff, board members and volunteers should not produce or distribute material to promote views which are offensive to people with a protected characteristic. Inappropriate, offensive or unwelcome language or content may result in disciplinary action being taken.

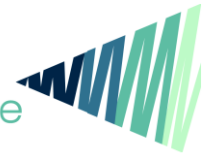


6 Disability and Access to Premises

- 6.1 East Sussex Community Voice will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate people with a disability and to enable them to do their job, (including volunteers), without unnecessary difficulty as set out in the Equality Act 2010. We will make adjustments whether or not we are obliged to do so by law, and whether or not a disabled applicant or employee is covered by the definition of disabled under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.2 We will monitor the physical features of our premises and those used for East Sussex Community Voice events and meetings (including commissioned programmes and initiatives) and take reasonable steps to improve access for board members, staff, volunteers and service users with a disability.

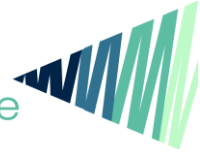
7 Recruitment and Selection

- 7.1 Recruitment, selection, training, promotion and employment practices will be subject to regular review (annually) to ensure they comply with the Equal Opportunity Policy.
- 7.2 We aim to ensure that no job applicant or person applying for a board or volunteer role suffers discrimination because of any protected characteristics (see 1.3). Our recruitment procedures will ensure that individuals are treated on their relevant merits and abilities.
- 7.3 Care will be taken to ensure that Job Descriptions/Role Profiles/Employee Specifications do not discriminate against any member of our communities.
- 7.4 Job and volunteer role advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying. A copy of this policy shall be sent on request to those who enquire about vacancies. Advertisements and application forms will make it clear that life experience as well as formal qualifications and work experience are equally as valid.
- 7.5 We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to the diverse population of East Sussex and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in East Sussex. This includes public and open promotion through social media, the press, publications, community groups, voluntary and community organisations and wider partner networks. Where appropriate, lawful exemptions should be set out in the advertisement.
- 7.6 All recruitment adverts will carry the statement *“East Sussex Community Voice is an Equal Opportunities and Diversity employer and welcomes*



candidates from all sections of the community.”

- 7.7 Applicants to any role should not be asked about health or disability before an offer is made. There are limited exceptions, for example:
- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job or volunteer role (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
 - Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
 - Positive action to recruit people with a disability.
 - Equal opportunities monitoring (which will be treated as confidential and will be clearly separated from all processes concerned with the decision-making process).
- 7.8 Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment.
- 7.9 Applicants are only appointed based on a proper match between their skills and experience and the essential stated requirements of the role.
- 7.10 All new staff, board members and volunteers will receive a copy of the Equal Opportunity Policy as part of their induction.
- 7.11 East Sussex Community Voice is required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective staff, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency and [Government website](#).
- 7.12 East Sussex Community Voice will monitor applicants protected characteristics as part of the recruitment procedure (for board members, staff and volunteers). This data will be used to assess whether this policy is operating effectively and help ESCV take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.
- 7.13 Provision of protected characteristic information is voluntary and will not adversely affect an individual’s chances of recruitment. The information will be removed from applications before shortlisting, and kept in an anonymous format solely for the monitoring purposes stated in this policy.



8 Training and Development

- 8.1 East Sussex Community Voice will provide such training and resources as are necessary to ensure all staff, board members, volunteers, students, clients and job applicants are aware of the Equal Opportunity Policy, understand it and their responsibilities, and are able to implement it effectively.
- 8.2 Staff and volunteer training needs and opportunities will be identified through regular supervision sessions. All staff and volunteers will be given appropriate access to training (subject to available resources), to enable them to progress and develop within East Sussex Community Voice and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

9 Procurement and contracts

- 9.1 Our influence extends to our responsibilities to ensure that organisations delivering services on our behalf, or from whom we purchase goods and services, do so in accordance with our policies. We expect all organisations with whom we have a contract to deliver services as required through policies that are compatible with ours.

10 Fair exit from services

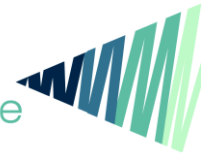
- 10.1 Fair exit from services is as important as fair access. Not every individual will agree that the time is right for them to move on from our services, but no individual should feel they have been unfairly 'pushed out' of an East Sussex Community Voice initiative or service in a way that is unplanned, rushed or unstructured.

11 Data Collection

- 11.1 East Sussex Community Voice complies with the requirement of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. Any data, either qualitative and or quantitative, required to monitor the requirements or the impact of the Equalities Act 2010, will be collected where it is reasonable, proportionate and practical to do so. Any such requirements will be notified to East Sussex Community Voice board, staff, volunteers and service users and will follow a common data format.

12 Dealing With Complaints

- 12.1 All board members, employees, volunteers and clients are responsible for behaving in accordance with this policy and have a duty as part of their

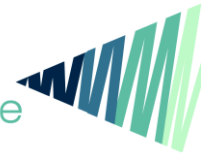


involvement with East Sussex Community Voice to do everything they can to ensure this policy is applied and effective in practice.

- 12.2 If any board member, staff member, volunteer or service user feels that they have, or are being discriminated against, they are encouraged to raise the matter through either our:
- Complaints Policy or
 - Volunteer Problem Solving Policy
- 12.3 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be taken seriously, treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Those who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.
- 12.4 False allegations which are found to have been of an unfounded nature or made maliciously will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure or Volunteer Problem Solving Policy (volunteers only).
- 12.5 Any member of staff or volunteer who is found to have committed an act of victimisation, discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. Condoning such behaviour may also be treated as a disciplinary offence. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.
- 12.6 East Sussex Community Voice will give appropriate support to people who complain of victimisation, discrimination or harassment of themselves or others.

13 Responsibilities

- 13.1 The Board of East Sussex Community Voice has the ultimate responsibility to implement and review this policy. The Board will scrutinise our work on Equal Opportunity to ensure that we meet our legal, ethical and operational commitments.
- 13.2 The East Sussex Community Voice Executive Director holds the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that the Equality Opportunity Policy is implemented. The Executive Director will:
- Advise, inform and consult with staff, volunteers and service users in order to progress and monitor equal opportunities within the organisation.



- Monitor and report to the East Sussex Community Voice HR Sub-Committee (quarterly) and Board (annually) on equal opportunities progress (applicant monitoring data), development and practice within the organisation.
- Ensure staff, service users' and volunteers' awareness and understanding of equal opportunities issues and practice via training and development.

14 Monitoring of this Policy

- 14.1 ESCV will maintain records of the protected characteristics of all employees, board members and volunteers (including applicants for these roles). Such records will be used solely for the purpose of monitoring equal opportunities.
- 14.2 Recording and regular analysis of shortlisting and selection decisions for employment (including board members and volunteers), promotion and access to training, as well as the composition of the workforce, will be carried out in order to assess whether equal opportunities and diversity at work are being achieved. This will include a breakdown of applicants by protected characteristics.
- 14.3 The organisation will monitor its Equal Opportunities Policy and the progress in achieving its objectives. Where barriers to equal opportunities and promoting diversity are identified, including any possible indirect discriminatory effects of working practices, an Action Plan will be produced and any necessary changes will be made to this policy and to those working practices.
- 14.4 This policy will be reviewed and updated on a two-year rolling basis by the East Sussex Community Voice HR Sub-Committee and Board, and on a six monthly rolling basis by the Healthwatch East Sussex Equalities & Inclusion Advisory Panel. This policy may be revised sooner if there is a change in working premises, conditions or laws directly affecting equal opportunities or any other aspect embedded in the document.