

East Sussex Community Voice

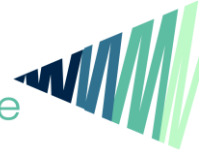
Volunteer Problem Solving Policy

Policy Schedule

Version	Date of next review by ESCV Board	Date of adoption by ESCV Board
1	n/a	September 2013
2	March 2015	x
3	March 2016	January 2024
4	January 2026	February 2026
5	February 2028	

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Volunteers bring many benefits to organisations, but there are occasions when problems may arise. This Volunteer Problem Solving Policy provides guidance to ensure consistent understanding and enable fast and fair action to resolve issues for volunteers and the organisation.
- 1.2 East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV) wants to ensure volunteering is a positive experience for everyone involved. Wherever possible, problems will be resolved through informal means through conversation with staff, guided by this problem-solving process.
- 1.3 Where it is not possible to resolve problems informally then issues can be addressed formally through a three-stage complaints process. This includes both where volunteers raise a complaint or are the subject of a complaint.
- 1.4 The [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) (NCVO) provides guidance on what a problem-solving process should cover. This includes:
- who the problem-solving process is for
 - what's seen as a problem, so everyone is clear when the process will apply
 - who is responsible for handling different kinds of complaints
 - steps to the process, such as fact-finding, an initial meeting followed by a review meeting, and who is responsible for these
 - what happens if problems continue
 - what happens in the case of serious breaches in conduct
 - how volunteers can appeal any decisions they're unhappy with.

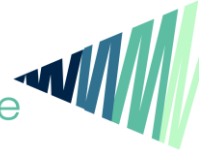


2 Purpose

- 2.1 This Volunteer Problem Solving Policy is primarily for ESCV volunteers so they have a clear understanding of how the organisation will address any problems identified with their volunteering role. It applies from the point applicants are formally accepted as volunteers for ESCV.
- 2.2 This policy also provides clarity and guidance for ESCV staff and Board members regarding the informal problem-solving process, and the complaints process where a formal complaint is registered by a volunteer or about a volunteer's conduct.
- 2.3 This policy links to the [ESCV complaints policy](#) but provides additional guidance to enable ESCV staff to take fair and fast action to address problems, with a focus on identifying solutions where possible and taking action where necessary.

3 Definitions

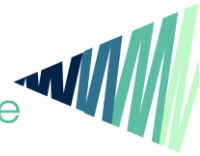
- 3.1 The NCVO guidance on the problem-solving process identifies problems as including, but not limited to:
 - volunteers struggling to do what the role asks
 - volunteers doing too much and feeling overwhelmed
 - difficult behaviour, such as not getting on with others or not turning up when they say they will
 - volunteers being unhappy with things the organisation is or is not doing
- 3.2 The NCVO guidance on the problem-solving process identifies more serious problems that can present a reputational risk to the host organisation including:
 - bullying or harassment
 - sharing confidential information
 - fraud or stealing funds
 - being under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- 3.3 In addition, there is an expectation that volunteers will adhere to ESCV [policies and procedures](#).



- 3.4 ESCV has a Volunteer Code of Conduct that new volunteers are asked to sign at the start of their induction into the organisation. The Code of Conduct requires:
- volunteers to act and conduct themselves in a reasonable and responsible way towards any staff, other volunteers or members of the public
 - volunteers to conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring ESCV or Healthwatch East Sussex into disrepute
 - volunteers to declare any conflict of interest, or anything that might be seen by others as a conflict of interest, within one month of it arising
 - volunteers to only attend meetings as a representative of ESCV (or Healthwatch East Sussex) with permission of ESCV
- 3.5 The full ESCV Volunteer Code of Conduct is attached as an Appendix to this policy and includes the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life. If volunteers do not comply with the Code of Conduct, then ESCV staff or Board members will need to apply this problem-solving process.

4 Informal Problem-Solving Process

- 4.1 **Fact-finding:** Where a problem has been identified, a member of the ESCV staff team will talk to the volunteer to find out the facts. If the problem involves several volunteers, then the staff member will try to talk to all those involved. The NCVO guidance identifies the staff member should:
- avoid taking sides
 - listen to what people have to say
 - not become defensive
 - try to stick to the facts
 - avoid blame
- 4.2 **Initial meeting:** The member of ESCV staff addressing the problem will meet with the volunteer to explain the problem and the impact it has had/may have. The staff member will avoid blaming the volunteer and they will seek to address the problem together. The staff member will involve the volunteer in deciding what will happen to address the problem and when. The staff member and volunteer will agree when they meet again to review progress.
- 4.3 **Informal solutions:** The ESCV member of staff will try to be flexible and creative in finding a solution to the problem. This could include:



- reminding the volunteer about the role and expectations (referencing the Code of Conduct and other commitments the volunteer has made)
- offering more support or training
- changing their tasks
- offering another role.

4.4 **If problems continue:** If the volunteer is unable to implement the informal solutions agreed in the problem-solving process, then a further meeting will be required to review things again. The ESCV staff member will need to be clear with the volunteer what will happen if the problem isn't resolved.

4.5 If there is still no progress in resolving the problem or issues, then the volunteer may decide to leave themselves.

5 Dismissing Volunteers

5.1 If problems have continued and a further review meeting cannot resolve the problem, then the ESCV staff member will have to dismiss the volunteer. Asking a volunteer to leave should always be a last resort. In some cases, it is a necessary response to a serious breach of conduct.

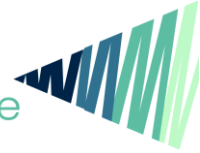
5.2 The ESCV staff member should prepare for the dismissal meeting by ensuring they have followed the problem-solving process. The meeting should be held at a place that is private and appropriate. The volunteer should have at least one week's notice and be given the opportunity to have someone attend with them if they would like. Two ESCV staff members will attend the meeting.

5.3 This meeting should be kept short, with the ESCV staff member explaining to the volunteer why they are being asked to leave. The volunteer should be thanked for their contribution, and the decision to dismiss them confirmed in writing to them within a week of the meeting.

5.4 ESCV volunteers will have the opportunity to appeal the decision to dismiss them with the same timescales as the formal volunteer complaints process (see below).

6 Formal Volunteer Complaints Process

6.1 ESCV wants to ensure that volunteering is a positive experience for everyone involved. There are occasions, however, when a volunteer may wish to make a formal complaint, or a formal complaint is made about a volunteer.



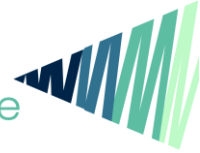
- 6.2 There is a three-stage procedure where volunteers make a complaint or are the subject of a complaint: an oral conversation; a written letter; and an opportunity to appeal the outcome.

7 Complaints made by volunteers

- 7.1 **Stage 1: Oral complaint.** Where a volunteer makes a complaint, this should first be discussed between the volunteer and a member of the ESCV staff team. The volunteer has the option of being accompanied to a meeting by a nominated person of their choice.
- 7.2 If the complaint concerns a member of ESCV staff, the matter should be referred to a manager or the Chief Executive. If the volunteer is not satisfied by the outcome of the oral complaint they should make a formal complaint in writing.
- 7.3 **Stage 2: Written complaint.** The volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to the Chief Executive within two weeks of making the oral complaint. The Chief Executive will respond to the complainant within 10 working days (or notify the volunteer within two weeks if the response will take longer).
- 7.4 **Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal.** If the volunteer is not satisfied with the response to their written complaint, they may appeal in writing to the Chair of ESCV. The volunteer will be advised at the start of the appeals process of the timescales involved. The Chair's decision on the matter will be final.

8 Complaints made about volunteers

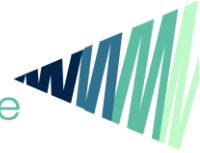
- 8.1 **Stage 1: Oral discussion.** The Engagement Manager (Volunteering) will arrange to meet with the volunteer to discuss the issues raised and gather information. The volunteer will be allowed to be accompanied by a person of their choice at meetings on the matter.
- 8.2 This meeting should remind the volunteer about the role and expectation, offer more support or training, change their task or identify an alternative role. The complaint may be resolved through an oral warning.
- 8.3 A further meeting should be agreed to review the situation with the volunteer.



- 8.4 **Stage 2: Written warning.** If the complaint has not been resolved by an oral discussion then the Engagement Manager (Volunteering) will issue the volunteer with a written warning (logged on their volunteer file) outlining the reason for the complaint.
- 8.5 The volunteer will be given the opportunity to respond to the written warning, either to the Engagement Manager (Volunteering) or the Chief Executive. The volunteer should submit their response within two weeks of their written warning.
- 8.6 A further meeting will be held to review the situation with the volunteer, who can be accompanied by a person of their choice if they choose. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set, and help offered to the volunteer.
- 8.7 In extreme circumstances, the Engagement Manager (Volunteering) may decide to cease an individual's volunteering with the organisation. Asking a volunteer to leave should always be a last resort. If the organisation decides to ask the volunteer to leave, then the volunteer will be given the opportunity to appeal.
- 8.8 **Stage 3: Opportunity to appeal.** If the volunteer has been asked to leave, they can appeal in writing to the Chair of the ESCV Board within two weeks of this decision. The Chair's decision on the matter will be final. The volunteer will be informed of the Chair's decision within 7 working days of the appeal being submitted.
- 8.9 If ESCV decides to ask a volunteer to leave, ESCV staff and/or Board members will meet with them to explain the decision, identify learning and agree next steps.

9 Exceptions

- 9.1 In some cases, volunteers may need to be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. This decision will be made by the Engagement Manager (Volunteering) or Chief Executive. These cases include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct:
- theft
 - assault
 - acts of violence
 - malicious damage
 - deliberate falsification of documents



- harassment
- being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

9.2 The decision to suspend a volunteer will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing. The volunteer will have the opportunity to respond in writing within two weeks of this notification, as in stage 2 of the formal complaints process. ESCV staff will follow the formal complaints process until a formal decision is made on whether to continue with or cease an individual's volunteering.

10 Compliance, Monitoring and Review

10.1 The Board of East Sussex Community Voice has the ultimate responsibility to implement and review this policy.

10.2 The Board of ESCV will scrutinise work on volunteering to ensure that we meet our legal, ethical and operational commitments.

10.3 The ESCV Chief Executive holds the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that the volunteering policies are implemented.

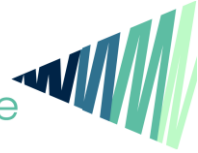
10.4 This policy will be reviewed and updated on a two-year rolling basis by the ESCV Board.

10.5 This policy may be revised sooner if there is a change in working premises, conditions or laws directly affecting volunteering or any other aspect embedded in the document.

11 Related Policies

11.1 The following policies and procedures that are related to this policy include:


- Complaints Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Volunteering Our Community Involved



11.2 Approval and Adoption

Author/Reviewer	Matthew Ryan
Sponsor	Veronica Kirwan
Date of approval and adoption	19 th February 2026
Date of next scheduled review	February 2028

Signature of East Sussex Community Voice CIC Board Chair

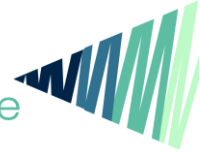
Name	Vanessa Taylor
Signature	
Date	12/03/26

Appendix: ESCV Volunteer Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct document sets out what is expected of ESCV Volunteers.

I understand that as a Volunteer for East Sussex Community Voice I will:

- Act and conduct myself in a reasonable and responsible way to any staff, volunteers or members of the public I work with or meet as a ESCV representative.
- Conduct myself in a manner that does not bring ESCV or Healthwatch East Sussex into disrepute or act in a manner that is not in the best interests of ESCV or the wider community.
- Never disclose confidential and sensitive information unless there is a legal duty to do so in the interests of child protection or protection of vulnerable adults. In any case seek advice before reporting.
- Attend/complete mandatory training to develop my skills and knowledge in the role.
- Declare any conflict of interest, or anything that might be seen by others as a conflict of interest, within one month of it arising.
- Not accept gifts or hospitality which could be seen as attempts to influence the decisions, independence or activities of ESCV.
- Understand and comply with the relevant and current legislation including policies for equal opportunities, discrimination, human rights, data protection and freedom of information etc.
- Treat all people with respect and act in a way which does not discriminate against or exclude anyone.
- Fulfil my volunteering role to the best of my ability.
- Attend meetings and other activities as required of the role including volunteer meetings, 1-2-1s, planning and debriefing sessions. Provide sufficient notice if I will not be available so that alternative arrangements can be made.



- Submit any expense claims within 3 months of the expenditure occurring.
- Report back when I attend any activity relating to ESCV and respond to requests for quarterly updates on my activities.
- Only attend meetings as a representative of ESCV/Healthwatch East Sussex with permission from ESCV.
- Adhere to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

The 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.

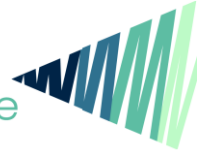
Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

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.

ESCV Volunteer



Name.....

Date

Signature