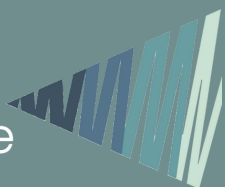


East Sussex  
Community Voice



# Volunteering *Our Community Involved*

Written: January 2024

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*East Sussex Community Voice are proud to be an accredited Investing in Volunteers organisation*



Established in 2013, East  
Sussex Community Voice  
(ESCV) is an independent  
Community Interest  
Company with the vision of

*Listened to communities  
bringing about positive  
change*

# Our mission is to

- Strengthen the voice of communities and contribute to effective decision-making.
- Generate insight and messaging that support services to be effective and inclusive.
- Be forward-thinking, optimistic change makers
- We are independent, impartial and accessible to all

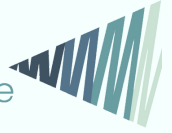
Our volunteers are essential to the successful delivery of our vision and mission.

They are the voices of their communities. They hear, listen to and represent our community and support us to bring about positive change for the residents of East Sussex.

Our volunteers are involved in all levels of our organisation. They are represented on our board and are key partners for setting the strategic and operational objectives of the organisation.

Our vision for volunteering at ESCV, is to be inclusive, diverse and ensure all members of our community have a voice.





# Recruitment

As a community voice organisation it is essential we have diverse volunteer representation, and we are committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of volunteers.

## How we advertise

We have a multi-channel approach to advertising our volunteer opportunities and work with partners across East Sussex to target specific groups.

- We advertise on the ESCV and the Healthwatch East Sussex website.
- We promote opportunities through our social media platforms and mailing lists.
- We work with local Voluntary Actions, The VCSE Alliance and through our statutory partners, East Sussex County Council and NHS Sussex.

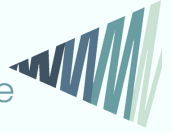
Our existing volunteers are incredible advocates for us and many of our volunteers are recruited by word of mouth.

## Role description

We work hard to make it clear what activities our volunteers can get involved with and how. We use clear role descriptions, which explain what volunteers can expect, the skills required and the support we offer to undertake the role. Our roles are regularly reviewed to make sure they are appropriate and fit for purpose.

Some of the roles our volunteers undertake on behalf of ESCV are within clinical settings or working directly with vulnerable people. All volunteers are required to provide references and if appropriate for the role we ask that a DBS check is completed. We store all personal information related to DBS checks securely in accordance with data protection legislation.





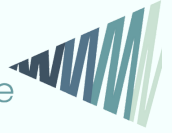
# Induction

Volunteers are an essential part of our team, and it is important that their induction is comprehensive and fit for purpose. Volunteers should be supported and engaged from their first interaction with ESCV.

We have a six step volunteer induction process.

- 1** Application form sent from the volunteer inbox (within 3 working days of contact being made).
- 2** Screening call (within 2 weeks of application being received)  
Once the form is completed and returned a screening call is conducted using the additional information form call conducted by member of the engagement team. The purpose of this call is an opportunity for us to get to know the applicant better, why they want to volunteer, what skills they have and explore if there is any conflict of interest.
- 3** Complete checks, including references and DBS where appropriate (information sent to applicants within 1 week of screening call).
- 4** Induction meeting (within six weeks of checks being completed)  
These will be group inductions via Zoom/Teams. It will include a member of the engagement team and an experienced volunteer. Information covered: volunteer portals, training, buddies, meetings, expectations. It gives the new volunteers the opportunity to ask questions and speak with existing volunteers.
- 5** Assigned a buddy. This is an existing and experienced volunteer who will offer informal support to new volunteers.
- 6** 1-2-1 with engagement staff member to check how new volunteers are settling (3 months after induction).





# Retention

Once volunteers have been inducted and are actively volunteering we want to ensure they are enjoying their volunteering and feeling valued for their contribution.

## Meetings

There are four formal volunteer meetings a year; which are a mix of in person and virtual meetings.

### March

Online planning meeting to discuss the workplans for the next financial year, ensuring volunteers are aware of our priorities and the focus for the coming year.

### June

In person meeting and celebration to coincide with Volunteers' Week. This gives us an opportunity to come together as a team and reward the amazing work of our volunteers.

### September

Online meeting where volunteers come together with staff to review the progress and success of our work, and begin planning for the next financial year.

### December

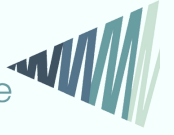
In person celebration event before the festive break and opportunity to come together as a team with a fun focus.

In addition, throughout the year volunteers will be involved in project specific meetings, and will attend training and other organisation wide events, including our Healthwatch Annual Event which all volunteers are invited to attend.

All volunteers are given opportunities for personal development and experienced volunteers are encouraged to become a 'buddy' to support the induction of new volunteers.







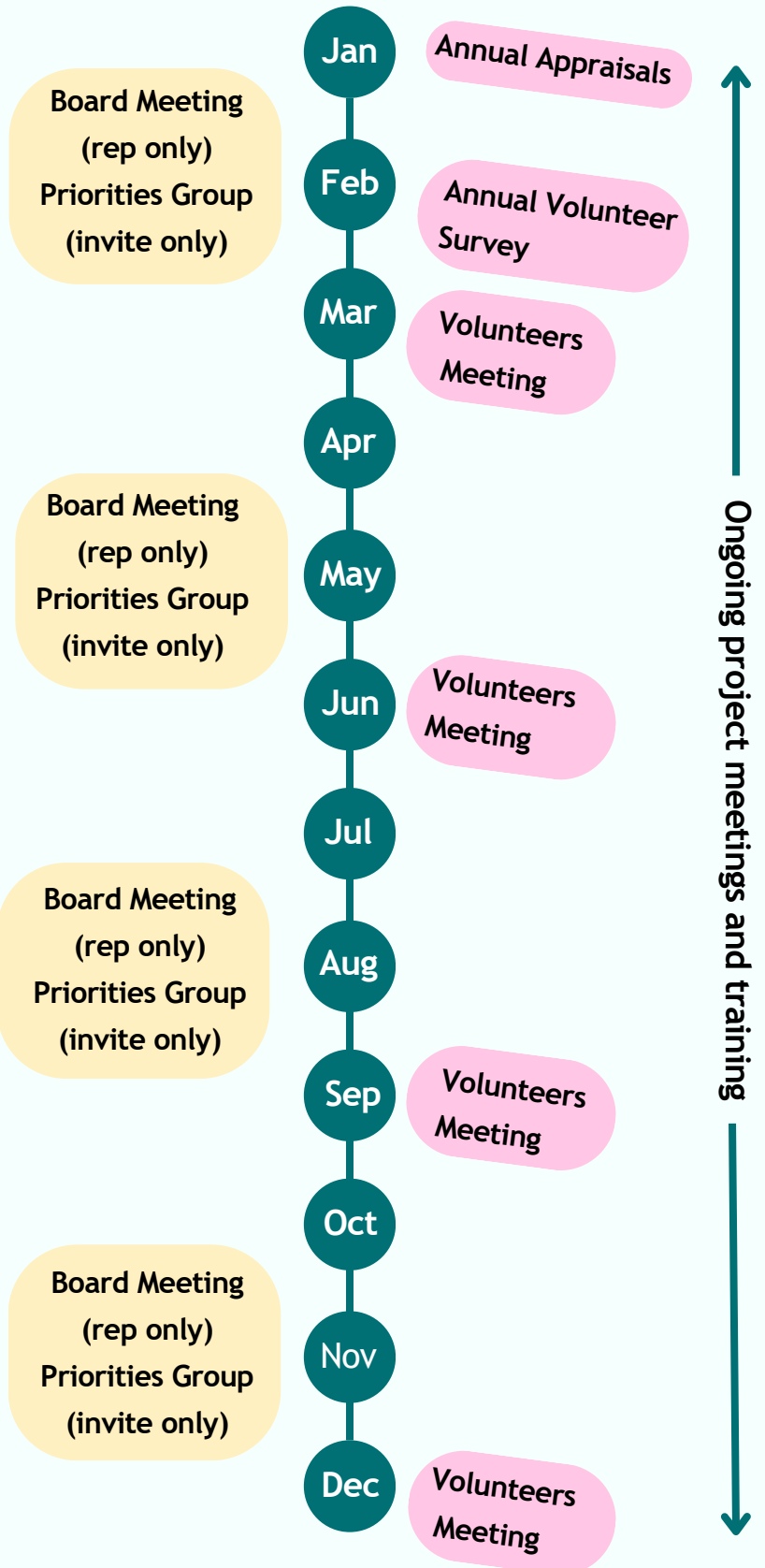
# Support & Supervision

We hold annual appraisal meetings with all volunteers to review the year, identify achievements and for volunteers to give feedback and suggest any areas for improvement.

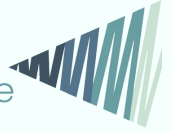
In addition we conduct an anonymous survey, from which all information gathered is used to produce a feedback report to our board and to create an action plan.

These are both shared with volunteers so there is transparency and to allow them to see what we are committed to over the coming year.

Volunteers are regularly in touch with staff and work together on projects. Issues or concerns are dealt with quickly.







# Training

It is important our volunteers have the knowledge and skills to be effective in their roles. Training forms an important part of supporting our volunteers and helping them to carry out their roles. There is a mix of compulsory and project-specific volunteer training to ensure all volunteers are adequately equipped.



## Compulsory annual training:

- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children (for specific roles)
- Data Protection and GDPR
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Enter and View training (for specific roles)

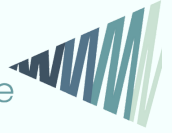
# Expenses



We work hard to remove barriers to volunteering, including providing out-of-pocket expenses. All volunteers are entitled to claim expenses to cover travel and subsistence.

We have a clear expenses policy which is shared with volunteers as part of their induction. We pay expenses in a timely way and where necessary can cover travel costs in advance to ensure that participation is possible.





# Reward & Recognition

Our volunteers are incredibly important to us, and we couldn't do what we do without them. We want them to feel valued and appreciated and to recognise the real difference they make to the communities they represent.

We recognise our volunteers in a number of ways, including in our project reporting, in our annual report and at our annual event.

How we reward & recognise our volunteers:

Volunteer bios in  
the Healthwatch  
annual report

Thank you sessions as  
part of our Annual  
Events

Volunteer celebration events  
twice a year including  
Volunteers' Week

# THANK YOU!

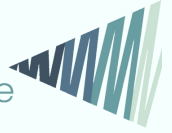
Personal thank you  
cards and mementoes

Branded  
clothing

Recognised in project reporting  
for their involvement

Share accomplishments  
through our newsletters,  
Volunteer Voice and social  
media





# Communicating with our volunteers

Good communication is essential.



We have a dedicated volunteer email inbox, monitored by the engagement team to ensure all enquiries are responded to quickly. Having a single point of contact ensures that messages aren't missed.

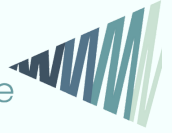


We also have a web-based volunteer portal. This is a closed area for volunteers only, for which they are provided with log in details. All volunteer information is saved on the portal, including: meeting actions, project updates, the 'Volunteer Voice' newsletter, training materials, policies and the volunteer handbook. It is a one stop shop for all volunteer information at ESCV. All volunteers are offered training and are regularly reminded to check the portal for updates and information.



Whilst email and the portal are the main way we share volunteer information, we also use WhatsApp, particularly for our Young Healthwatch volunteers. We can take a specific approach to communicating with volunteers when needed and have volunteers who are not online, we work hard to ensure all volunteers receive the same information and opportunities.

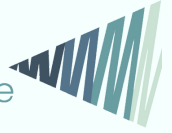




# How we are a 'volunteering first' organisation

We believe in a top-down, bottom-up approach. Volunteers are represented at all levels within the organisation. They sit on our boards, inform project development and delivery and represent us with key partners and stakeholders at strategic meetings.

- 1 Volunteering is covered in staff inductions.
  - 2 All staff and board members are invited to attend volunteer meetings & events.
  - 3 Senior staff (including the director) are expected to prioritise and attend volunteer celebration events.
  - 4 An elected volunteer representative is on our board.
  - 5 A named board member is responsible for oversight of volunteering.
  - 6 Our policies support our volunteers.
  - 7 Quarterly volunteer updates to our board and funders.
  - 8 Volunteers help plan projects and feed back experiences to inform recommendations.
  - 9 Volunteer section in our annual report.
  - 10 Volunteers sit on our business sub committee and contribute to setting the priorities for the organisation with our board and staff.
  - 11 We have a protected annual budget for volunteering to ensure our volunteers are supported.
-



# The difference our volunteers make

A big motivator for volunteering is the desire to make a difference; volunteers want to see and understand the difference they make to their communities.

At ESCV we believe that demonstrating the impact our volunteers have made is essential to showing the value they have within the organisation and the wider community.

Their voices are powerful, they are recognised for their experience and independence and are listened to by decision makers and partners.

## How we monitor, record and demonstrate volunteer activity

- We ask volunteers to report the number of hours and activities they undertake and use this information to feed into our quarterly and annual reporting.
- Our volunteers are an important link to our communities and are a vital source of intelligence. They share what they are hearing with us, and this is recorded in our Issues Log to help us build a picture of the challenges our communities are facing and highlight good practice.
- We hold project debrief sessions with volunteers to understand their contribution and ensure it features in reporting and recommendations.
- We provide quarterly volunteering updates to the ESCV board and funders.
- There is a volunteer section in our annual report, with individual volunteer spotlights.



