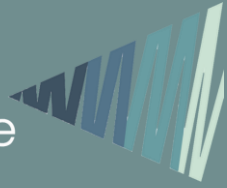




East Sussex
Community Voice



Volunteering *Our Community Involved*

Written: August 2025

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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

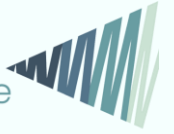
Our volunteers are essential to the successful delivery of our vision and mission.

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 the 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 that we have diverse volunteer representation, therefore we are committed to recruiting from 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 at East Sussex County Council and NHS Sussex.

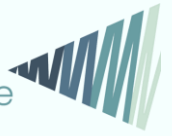
Our existing volunteers are incredible advocates for us and many of our volunteers are recruited by word of mouth.

Role description

We work hard to make it clear what activities our volunteers can get involved with and how. We use clear role descriptions that explain what volunteers can expect, the skills required, and the support needed 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 and work directly with vulnerable patients. All volunteers are required to provide references, and when appropriate for the role we ask that a DBS check is completed. We store all personal information with regards to DBS securely on our digital file system and do not keep paper copies.





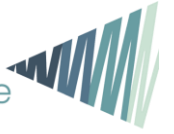
Induction

Volunteers are an essential part of the team, therefore 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 Volunteer application form.** We have an online application form with a link from our website. Application forms can also be sent using the dedicated volunteer email (within 3 working days of contact from an applicant).
- 2 Informal conversation** (within 2 weeks of application being received). Once the application form is completed and received an informal conversation is arranged. The conversation is with a member of the engagement team. The purpose of this conversation is 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. The outcome of the initial conversation is confirmed with all applicants.
- 3 Complete checks.** This includes references and DBS where appropriate (information sent to applicants within 1 week of the informal conversation).
- 4 Induction meeting** (within six weeks of informal conversation). This will be held in a small group of new volunteers or held individually via Zoom/Teams. It will be held by a member of the engagement team with an experienced volunteer if available. Information covered will include volunteer qualities, roles, training, meetings, and expenses. It gives the new volunteers the opportunity to ask questions about the volunteering roles with ESCV.
- 5 Mandatory training** (within three months of induction). This includes: safeguarding; equality, diversity, equity and inclusion; confidentiality, information sharing, and data protection.
- 6 Begin volunteering** (from three months of induction). New volunteers are paired with an existing and experienced volunteer acting as a 'buddy' to provide informal support with initial volunteering activities.





Retention

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

Meetings and celebrations

There are six formal volunteer meetings a year; we have a mix of in-person and virtual meetings. There are also two in-person celebrations of volunteering:

June

In-person 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.

December

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

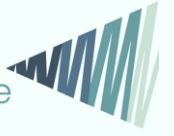
In addition, throughout the year volunteers will be involved in project specific meetings and will attend training and other organisation-wide events.

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

Experienced volunteers have the opportunity to serve as a volunteer representative in strategic decision-making on the ESCV Board.

Experienced volunteers can also serve as volunteer representatives on the Business and Priorities Subgroup of the ESCV Board, helping to shape the operational objectives of the organisation.





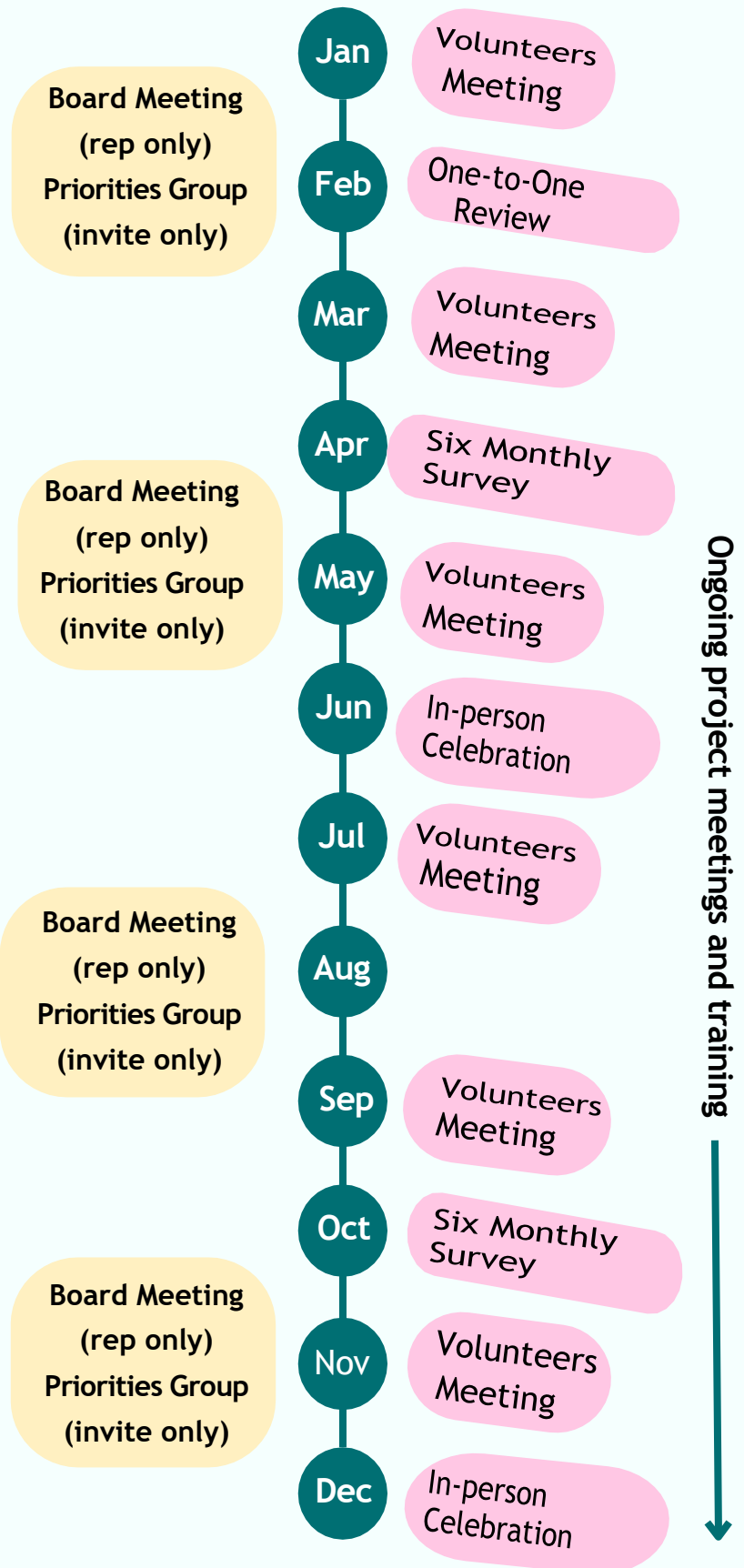
Support & Supervision

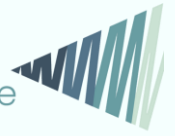
We hold annual one-to-one review meetings with all volunteers to review the year, to identify achievements, and for volunteers to give feedback and suggest any areas for improvement.

In addition, we conduct an anonymous six-monthly survey, from which all information gathered is used to produce a feedback report to the 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, and issues or concerns are dealt with quickly.





Training

It is important that 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 training to ensure all volunteers are adequately equipped.

Mandatory training:

- Safeguarding
- Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Confidentiality, Information Sharing and Data Protection

Optional training:

- Enter and View training (for specific roles)
- Project briefing before activities

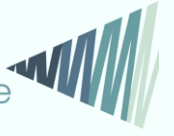


Expenses



We work hard to remove barriers to volunteering, and this includes 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 project reporting, in our annual report, and at our events.

How we reward and recognise our volunteers

Volunteer bios in
our annual
report

Personal thank you
cards and
mementoes

Volunteer celebration events
twice a year including
Volunteers' Week

THANK YOU!

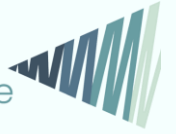
Recognition of their
role in supporting
events

Identity
badges

Recognition in project
reporting for their involvement

Sharing accomplishments
through our newsletters,
Volunteer Voice and social
media





Communicating with our volunteers

Good communication is essential.



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

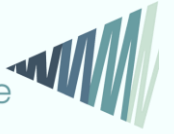


We also have a volunteer web page for prospective and existing volunteers. This includes descriptions of volunteer roles and a link to the application form for prospective volunteers. The ESCV website includes copies of the Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Problem Solving Policy, and this *Volunteering: Our Community Involved* document.



Whilst email is the main way we share volunteer information, we may also use other digital tools, 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 ensure everyone receives the same information and opportunities so that no one is digitally excluded.

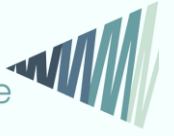




How we are a 'volunteering first' organisation

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 and events.
- 3 Senior staff (including the Chief Executive Officer) are expected to prioritise and attend volunteer celebration events.
- 4 An elected volunteer representative is on the ESCV Board.
- 5 A named Board member is responsible for oversight of volunteering.
- 6 Policies that support our volunteers.
- 7 Quarterly volunteer update to our Board and funders.
- 8 Volunteers help plan projects and feedback experiences to inform recommendations.
- 9 Volunteer section in our annual report.
- 10 Volunteers sit on our Priorities and Business Sub Committee and have a voice in setting the priorities for the organisation alongside 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 is essential to showing the value they have within the organisation and the wider community.

Volunteer 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 record the number of hours and activities volunteers 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 useful source of intelligence. They share what they are hearing with us, and this is recorded in our feedback channels 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.



