

Citizens Advice East Suffolk Equality and Diversity Policy for Volunteers

1. Introduction

1.1 Citizens Advice East Suffolk is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for:

- all those who need our services
- our volunteers
- our staff and
- other stakeholders.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, and challenging discrimination.

We welcome our legal duties not to discriminate as a service provider and an employer. We aim to go beyond the narrow scope of legislative compliance and follow best practice, making equality, diversity and inclusion a fundamental part of all our activities.

We recognise people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and we wish to encourage and harness these differences to make our services more relevant and accessible .

1.2 Citizens Advice East Suffolk will not discriminate or tolerate discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of race, colour, sex, gender identity (transgender), disability, nationality, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, marital / partnership or family status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, those identifying as non-binary, social class, educational background, employment status, working pattern, trade union membership or any other factor.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy relates to the work undertaken by Citizens Advice East Suffolk involving volunteers, including: meeting clients' needs, service delivery, working with and supporting volunteers and staff, suppliers, supporters and other associated third parties.

3. Legal obligations

3.1 Volunteers do not fall within the scope of the legislation listed below. However, this list serves to illustrate to volunteers the framework within which the local Citizens Advice operates and that we are committed to providing our services in a way which is non-discriminatory and which values diversity.

3.2 The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation. The following legislation is still relevant:

- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Work and Families Act 2006.
- Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

3.3 The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gives people who have changed their gender from the one they were assigned at birth, full recognition in their acquired sex in law for all purposes. A person's transgender status cannot lawfully be disclosed except in specific circumstances which are set out in s22(4) of this Act and Gender Recognition (Disclosure of Information) No. 2 Order.

3.4 When carrying out monitoring in accordance with this policy, we will comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. In particular, as data controller (the employer in this instance) we will take into account the sensitivity and risk to individuals in respect of the use of their personal data and special category data. In light of the potential risks to individuals, we will consider in detail how we use diversity data, such as transgender status, in compliance with the GDPR and we will ensure that appropriate security controls are in place.

4. Meeting clients' needs

4.1 We are committed to treating all clients equally and fairly and to not discriminating unlawfully against them. We will also, wherever possible, take steps to promote equality of opportunity. We will ensure that clients:

- won't struggle to get help from us.
- will have help to find a way forward, whatever their problem
- are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination
- will get the level of support they need
- know that we will speak up for them

4.2 Citizens Advice East Suffolk is committed to meeting the diverse needs of clients. We will take steps to identify the needs of clients in our community and develop policies and procedures accordingly. We aim to ensure that the services we provide are accessible to all. We will take into account, in particular, the needs of disabled clients (including mental health problems) and clients who are unable to communicate effectively in English, including those who are Deaf, who use BSL and who are hard of hearing. We will consider whether particular groups are predominant within our client base and devise appropriate policies / procedures to meet their needs. Such groups include men and women, those who identify as non-binary or who do not identify to binary genders; carers; older people; members of religious groups; ethnic groups or nationalities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual and transgender people.

5. Volunteers

5.1 General statement

Volunteers contribute significantly to the diversity of the organisation. They can expect to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination. They are likewise expected to treat others fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination. Due to the restrictions imposed by employment law, volunteers are not entitled to the same rights and protections as employees.

6. Implementing the policy

6.1 Responsibilities

6.1.1 All staff, managers, volunteers and trustees will be given a copy of an equality and diversity policy as part of their induction.

6.1.2 All volunteers

At all levels of the organisation, including trustees, volunteers are expected to have read and understood this policy, to ensure that they behave in accordance with its principles and requirements, to encourage the same level of behaviour in colleagues and to immediately report any breaches witnessed, whenever it is reasonable for them to do so.

6.1.3 All managers

Managers are responsible for promoting this policy and ensuring it is understood and complied with by all volunteers, dealing with breaches and complaints (whether reported or not) seriously, speedily, sensitively and confidentially and contributing ideas for the advancement of diversity principles within the organisation. Managers are expected to be proactive in identifying circumstances in which elements of the policy can benefit individual volunteers, and encourage and support volunteers in making use of such benefits.

6.2 Conduct and general standards of behaviour

All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. Citizens Advice East Suffolk will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- making threats
- physical violence
- shouting
- swearing at others
- rudeness
- isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- telling offensive jokes or name calling

- displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format
- any other forms of harassment and victimisation.

Citizens Advice East Suffolk encourages volunteers to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for a volunteer who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and in order to prevent further similar problems in the future.

6.3 Complaints of discrimination

Citizens Advice East Suffolk will treat seriously all complaints of discrimination made by volunteers and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints by volunteers will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's volunteer complaints procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by volunteers.

7. Monitoring

7.1. Citizens Advice East Suffolk will monitor and record diversity information about staff and volunteers, including trustees, on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity and disability.

7.2 Where it is possible to do so, and where doing so will not cause offence or discomfort to those whom it is intended to protect, we will monitor the sexual orientation and religion or belief of staff and volunteers to ensure that they are not being discriminated against in terms of the opportunities or benefits available to them.

We will regard diversity monitoring data as being confidential and appropriately restrict access to this information. Diversity monitoring data will be used exclusively for the purposes of diversity monitoring and will have no bearing on opportunities or benefits.

8. Review

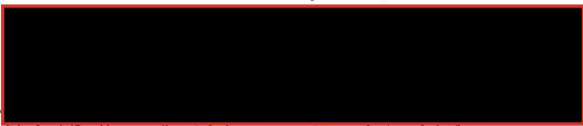
8.1 The Trustee Board will have oversight of this policy and will receive regular reports and monitor the effectiveness of this policy at regular intervals in accordance with the requirements of the Leadership Self Assessment, in particular the Equality Standard. Where under-representation of particular groups is identified, the Board will consider appropriate remedial action such as the setting of targets and/or positive action measures provided for in the Equality Act 2010. The Trustee Board should undertake annual reviews of this policy, especially where there are changes in legislation or significant developments in the area of equality, diversity, inclusion or Human Rights.

Signed by

Title

Date

26/4/2022.


Chief Officer Citizens Advice, East Suffolk,
Lester Office.