Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity

1. Protected Characteristics
The Equality Act 2010 has extended the protection from six equality strands to nine ‘protected characteristics’, which are:
- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Under the Act people are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics.

2. Aims
This Code of Practice aims to comply with the Equality Act 2010 which includes a new Public Sector Equality Duty which states that public bodies, and those bodies who carry out work on their behalf, must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups

3. Commitments
1. Recognition that the Voluntary and Community Sector represents diverse people, communities and families in East Sussex, including faith groups and refugee and asylum seekers. There will also be a range of views, in terms of cultural, economic and social background.

2. As some protected groups of the Voluntary and Community Sector are underdeveloped in comparison with mainstream Voluntary Sector, all sectors must work with individuals and communities, as well as with organised voluntary and community groups.

3. Acknowledgement that joint action between all sectors is crucial in achieving equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and eliminating discrimination.

4. Promote better understanding and awareness of the diversity, independence and contribution of people with protected characteristics.

5. Establish principles that underpin joint action to effectively achieve equality of opportunity, foster good relations and eliminate discrimination.

6. Help develop the capacity and infrastructure of protected groups in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

7. Actively promote the involvement of individuals, communities and small groups who are affected by partnership activities but not yet organised to participate.

8. Establish and implement equality objectives and publish equality information.

9. Ensure equality of access to quality public services and the active involvement of protected groups in service planning, performance management and scrutiny processes.

10. Actively promote equal opportunities and raise awareness of diverse communities and equality issues within their own organisations.

11. Operate effective equal opportunity monitoring and evaluation systems.
Equality and Diversity Checklist

Both sectors recognise the important role of people with protected characteristics and diverse communities in ensuring the Voluntary and Community Sector is more representative of society.

Effective consultation and engagement with diverse communities ensures that Public Sector organisations can tailor their services to meet community needs.

This checklist is specifically for working with people with the protected characteristics

**Ensuring a voice for diverse communities**

☐ The specific needs of protected groups are recognised and appropriate support is provided to enable these groups have their say

☐ Protected groups with expertise in a particular issue are invited to be involved in the development and delivery of solutions at the outset

☐ Any specific barriers to protected groups getting involved are identified and attempts are made to overcome them

**Enabling positive community identity**

☐ Protected groups are recognised and respected;

☐ The independence of protected groups, and their right to challenge policy and practice is recognised and respected

☐ Encourage people from protected groups to carry out leadership roles in community networks.

☐ Community leaders will ensure that they represent the interests of their community fairly and honestly when asked to speak on its behalf

**Supporting the community**

☐ Public Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector recognise the importance of understanding diverse communities and commit to gather information and build good working relationships

☐ Principles that effectively achieve the three aims of the general Equality Duty are developed and promoted in all policy

☐ It is recognised that people with different protected characteristics may have a different experience of volunteering and community work, and specific support is provided in line with the checklist guidance for volunteering