

# Crowborough Community Orchard Equality and Diversity Policy



v1 March 2023

# Introduction

## **Crowborough Community Orchard (CCO):**

**ACCEPTS** that in society certain groups or individuals are denied equality on the grounds of race, gender, marital status, caring responsibilities, disability, gender re-assignment, age, social class, sexual orientation and religion/belief or any other factor irrelevant to the purpose in view.

**WELCOMES** the statutory requirements laid down in the Equality Act 2010:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/your-rights-under-equality-act-2010>

and is committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 with such other Acts and statutory requirements furthering equality of opportunity for all.

**RECOGNISES** that it has moral and social responsibilities that go beyond the provisions of the above-mentioned Acts and Regulations, and that it should support and contribute to the wider process of change through all aspects of its work and practices in order to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and diversity.

**IS COMMITTED** to taking positive steps to ensure that:

- all people are treated with dignity and respect, valuing the diversity of all
- equality of opportunity and diversity is promoted
- services are accessible, appropriate and delivered fairly to all.

This policy applies to all committee members, volunteers, CCO members, users and participants.

## **Commitment**

CCO will treat all people with dignity and respect, valuing the diversity of all. It will promote equality of opportunity and diversity. Within its work it will eliminate all forms of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, marital status, caring responsibilities, disability, gender re-assignment, age, social class, sexual orientation, religion/belief, irrelevant offending background or any other factor irrelevant to the purpose in view. It will seek to help tackle social exclusion, inequality, discrimination and disadvantage.

For this policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone involved in the orchard is committed to and involved in its delivery. CCO aims to embed this in all its policies, procedures, day-to-day practices and external relationships.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure equal opportunities for all volunteers and participants, irrespective of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital or civil partner status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, disability, age, religion or belief (the “protected characteristics”). We value diversity and the individuality and creativity that every volunteer and participant potentially brings to the organisation.

## Application of the Policy

This policy applies to all the volunteers and participants with CCO.

If this policy of quality and diversity is not applied, valuable talent and potential may be wasted. Discrimination, harassment, and victimisation are not only illegal, but also affect morale and project success generally, and can bring about a climate of fear and insecurity.

CCO takes equality and diversity very seriously and will not tolerate acts which breach this policy. It is the responsibility of all volunteers and other participants to ensure their conduct conforms with the expected standards and reflects this policy.

## Operating Principles

- Volunteers and participants will be treated fairly, openly and honestly, and with dignity and respect. We will endeavour to make all volunteers feel welcome and provide a variety of tasks at work parties suitable for all. Children are welcome at all sessions and the site is enclosed and safe. As the site develops there will be Forest School and other activities in place for them to do.
- At all times people’s feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used.
- No volunteer or participant will receive less favourable treatment on grounds of any protected characteristic.
- Training opportunities will be available to all volunteers and participants.
- Equality of opportunity is about good volunteer practice. Steps will be taken to make sure all practices ensure equal opportunities.
- Everyone has the right to volunteer in an environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. We will not tolerate such behaviour under any circumstances.
- We will publish our equality and diversity policy on our website, reference it as appropriate and make volunteers and participants aware of it.
- We welcome any suggestions which will assist CCO to be more inclusive in our activities and undertake to consider such suggestions seriously and respond to them.

## Breaches of the Policy

- Any volunteer or participant who feels that they have been subjected to a breach of this policy, should as a priority raise their concerns with a member of the committee.
- Whilst recognising that there will be circumstances in which it may not be possible or appropriate to reach an amicable solution (a particularly serious breach of the policy, for example), we would hope in most cases to be able to find a resolution. In the first instance, any volunteer or participant who is found to have committed acts of discrimination or harassment following an investigation by the committee, will be expected to resolve the matter with an acceptable apology and undertaking that the offence will not be repeated.
- If the matter cannot be resolved to the committee's satisfaction, then the volunteer or participant will be required to leave and not participate in any further group activities.
- If any participant or volunteer feels that the Policy has not been applied in their case, they may discuss the matter with the committee. Anyone is entitled to raise a formal complaint at any time.
- Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will as far as possible be treated in confidence and investigated. Volunteers or participants who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.

## Equalities Impact Assessment

At the current time the orchard does not hold equalities information on members or participants and does not intend to request it. Members, sponsors and volunteers are representative of the local population. Orchard membership is open to everyone and very low cost. The current operating model and working practices do not risk discrimination against the protected characteristics, with the exception of people with physical disabilities, who are likely to find accessing and moving around the site challenging. This issue is addressed below.

## Physical Access

The committee is conscious that physical access to the site is currently not ideal with a raised kerb and grassed slope leading to the access gate and no surfaced paths. The terrain across the site is generally uneven. As funding opportunities arise, it is the aim of the committee to improve site accessibility, bearing in mind the naturalistic context of the site. Path surfacing materials will consist of porous, natural materials, such as self-binding gravel or hoggin. The specific intentions are currently:

- Install surfaced paths within the planned Pollinator Garden.
- Create a surfaced path running from the access gate to the entrance to the Forest School.
- Install a dropped kerb and surfaced access to the main gate.
- Create a small number of further surfaced paths – for example from the Forest School area to the soft fruit cages and pond dipping platform.

Signed:

David Martin, Chair

Date:

Review date: March 2025