



## SpeakUp Forum Terms of Reference

### MISSION AND AIMS

The SpeakUp Forum is a countywide network for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in East Sussex. Our twofold mission is: To lead dialogue and connection within the VCS to support sector sustainability and development; and to work with the public sector to jointly develop a culture of, and systems for, collaboration and system leadership.

SpeakUp Forum pursues this mission by:

1. Enabling the VCS to engage in dialogue, share information and views, build knowledge, identify trends, and agree shared messages and actions;
2. Enabling the emergence of leadership from the VCS, to lead within and beyond the sector;
3. Engaging in strategic collaborations with the public sector to agree and own shared agendas and values, and work to address shared priorities;
4. Advocating for the VCS and constructively challenging the public sector where priorities and agendas are not shared.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SpeakUp Forum makes decisions and takes actions according to the following principles:

- People and communities are at the heart of everything we do.
- We strive for open and honest dialogue, within our VCS network and our multi-sector partnerships.
- We are proactive and pragmatic, and use our energies and resources in ways we think will be most beneficial to local communities and to the VCS.
- We embrace multiple perspectives, change, and uncertainty.
- We share the responsibility for joint learning and development across sectors.

### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Coordinating an open network of members from the VCS (“the SpeakUp Forum”)
- Organising bimonthly meetings of the SpeakUp Forum and online communications
- Collating and sharing feedback from, and to, cross-sector partnerships
- Collating and sharing feedback from, and to, community networks and other local structures and processes
- Organising issue-based VCS working groups and/or partnerships
- Sharing SpeakUp-related information, activities, trends, issues, stories and positions with the wider VCS and other sectors
- Appointing SpeakUp representatives to cross-sector partnerships
- Supporting SpeakUp members and the public sector with skills development
- Organising an annual Big Event
- Organising an annual cross-sector reflection and learning workshop

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the SpeakUp Forum is open to staff and volunteers from any VCS organisation in East Sussex. Members are often senior staff and trustees or chief executives. All members will be supported to develop and engage appropriate skills and knowledge to participate in strategic discussions within and beyond the VCS.

The SpeakUp Forum aims for inclusivity, diversity, and fluidity of membership. We have identified the following broad constituencies (of place, interest and identity) and work to ensure that knowledge and experience of every constituency is present within the active network. Members do not act on behalf of any single organisation at the SpeakUp Forum, but share perspectives and knowledge from the full breadth of constituencies to which they are connected.

*Constituencies of place* include Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Wealden, Rother, and rural areas.

*Constituencies of interest* include: children and young people; older people; transport; financial inclusion; domestic violence; carers; environment; health and social care; advocacy; volunteer support; learning provision.

*Constituencies of identity* include: travellers; faiths; disabilities/equalities; LGBT; BME; mental health.

## **REPRESENTATION**

Members of the SpeakUp Forum will be appointed to act on behalf of SpeakUp at cross-sector partnerships. These SpeakUp representatives do not represent their own organisation in such partnerships, but the interests and perspectives of the SpeakUp countywide VCS network.

Through the forum's feedback mechanisms, SpeakUp representatives provide a two-way pathway for sharing developments, concerns, opportunities and aspirations between the VCS and county strategic planning processes. SpeakUp representatives are appointed primarily to decision-making partnerships, but may also participate in oversight, advisory, or operational/delivery spaces where SpeakUp participation is deemed strategically beneficial.

## **FEEDBACK MECHANISMS**

SpeakUp Forum bimonthly face-to-face meetings and online communications are both central for sharing and sourcing feedback and feed-in.

For feedback to and from cross-sector partnerships:

- SpeakUp representatives will complete a feedback form after each partnership meeting. The details from these forms will be used to: i) Share updates and developments from each partnership meeting with SpeakUp Forum members; ii) Detail issues that the SpeakUp representative, or the partnership, would like SpeakUp to discuss and/or act upon; iii) Identify emerging trends and patterns across the partnership landscape; and iv) Form the basis for documenting and monitoring stories from each partnership, and the ways in which the SpeakUp Forum collaborates within the partnership (e.g. contributing to shared agendas and priorities and/or constructively challenging different perspectives).
- Issues that are raised through feedback forms will be taken forwards in face-to-face and/or online SpeakUp Forum discussions, and actions taken will be monitored and followed up.

- Actions will include, *inter alia*: taking issues forwards within cross-sector partnerships or with community networks; raising and discussing issues with relevant public sector officers or VCS colleagues; and writing and sharing SpeakUp position papers.
- SpeakUp representatives will seek additional/specific input and perspectives from the SpeakUp network as and when necessary for particular partnerships or actions.

For feedback to and from communities and the wider VCS:

- The SpeakUp Forum will use four primary avenues for sharing information with communities and the wider VCS: i) The SpeakUp Forum website; ii) The SpeakUp Forum Twitter account; iii) Published articles and announcements in local newsletters and e-bulletins e.g. Councils for Voluntary Services e-bulletins, East Sussex Strategic Partnership e-newsletter, Your County; iv) cascading information via SpeakUp members.
- SpeakUp will engage regularly with the eight local community networks in East Sussex to: i) Understand the key issues, needs and actions that are emerging in each network; ii) Detail any issues that the network would like SpeakUp to discuss and/or take forwards at a strategic level; iii) Identify emerging trends and patterns across East Sussex; and iv) Feedback updates or relevant information from the SpeakUp Forum's strategic work.
- It is expected that SpeakUp members are kept up to date with constituency issues and perspectives through their day-to-day organisational roles. Members are responsible for bringing key issues to the attention of the broader SpeakUp network, through face-to-face and/or online discussions.
- As with issues raised from cross-sector partnerships, SpeakUp may decide to take action in relation to issues raised by constituencies. Such actions will include, *inter alia*: taking issues forwards within cross-sector partnerships or with community networks; raising and discussing issues with relevant public sector officers and VCS colleagues; and writing and sharing SpeakUp position papers.
- Information on actions and/or progress with issues will be fed back to relevant constituencies through SpeakUp Forum members, the SpeakUp website and Twitter account, and newsletter articles and announcements.

The annual Big Event is an established and popular space for a wide section of the VCS and the public sector to come together for networking, dialogue and information exchange. The event will always be based on a theme that has arisen from SpeakUp's broader work, and provides an opportunity for related issues to be collectively surfaced and explored. Outcomes from Big Event discussions are integrated, and key messages are fed back to SpeakUp members, the broad VCS, and the public sector.