**Voice of Youth**

**Last update: March 2013**

Equality and diversity are at the heart of all of Voice of Youth's core principles:

*1. Young people choose whether and how to become involved with our groups and work.*

*2. Our work starts from the needs and wishes of young people in Hackney and all funding bids will reflect this.*

*3. We involve young people in taking action to improve their own lives and the lives of their communities;*

*4. We promote equality and challenge oppressive structures in society, institutions, groups and individuals, including in our own organisation.*

*5. We promote co-operative decision making in our own work, in our youth groups and in the communities where we work.*

At Voice of Youth we believe in keeping our policies short so every worker including volunteers can be very familiar with them. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity in our work with young people, with each other, and in the wider world. This is a practical policy arising from conversations between youth workers and young people, and will continue to be developed.

Youth workers will:

* Challenge young people to think about language and attitudes which discriminate against others.
* Learn about equality and diversity through training and education, and through individual and group reflection and evaluation.
* Run sessions with young people on equality and diversity issues.
* Think about equality and diversity in terms of who uses our services, who works for us, and how we represent people on our website and publicity materials.
* Do all we can to include all young people (e.g. avoid bans or exclusions where possible, even if behaviour is challenging).
* Listen to quiet people as well as confident people.
* Challenge bullying.
* Create working agreements with groups of young people.
* Make links between groups of young people from different areas or different backgrounds or experiences.
* Work with young people to challenge inequality in society.
* Provide snacks and food appropriate for the people in the group, e.g. Muslims, vegetarians.
* Give choices of activities where possible so different young people can feel included.
* Think about fairness and making it clear how decisions are made, e.g. who comes on trips.
* Think before organising competitions –how to make sure those who lose don't feel bad.

VOY as an organisation will:

* Pay all youth workers the same hourly rate.
* Encourage young people to gain experience and become youth workers themselves.
* Involve all workers and volunteers in decisions about running VOY.
* Think about equality when making decisions.
* Try to ensure a diverse group of workers.
* Avoid hierarchical structures.