



FRESH Equality Forum

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

Through a network of partnerships, the Equality Forum seeks to promote equality and diversity, to eliminate all forms of unfair treatment and discrimination in Shropshire and to improve the social and environmental well-being of Shropshire's diverse communities. It seeks to engage key organisations with representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

2. Purpose of the Equality Forum

The purpose of the Equality Forum is to develop and support a network of statutory and voluntary agencies, local community groups, commercial organisations and individual activists to discuss and take action on equality, diversity and anti-discrimination issues across the county. The Forum supports the elimination of all forms of unfair treatment and discrimination, and supports making Shropshire a welcoming place for all.

3. Aims of the Equality Forum

The Equality Forum will:

- 3.1 Meet four times a year (any sub-groups will meet as required)
- 3.2 Agree objectives for the year at first meeting
- 3.3 Agree on effective use of available funding to sponsor events and activities
- 3.4 Receive reports on and monitor the progress of its work
- 3.5 Monitor and review its membership to ensure it is representative of protected characteristics and of Shropshire's wider communities

4. Values of the Equality Forum

Members of the forum agree to subscribe to the following set of values:

4.1. Equality and Anti-discrimination

The Forum will challenge structural inequalities and discriminatory practices in Shropshire. The Forum recognises that while people are different, they are all of equal worth and importance and entitled to the same degree of respect and inclusion.

The Forum works with individuals, communities and organisations to challenge oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups in ways which:



- Acknowledge where there is inequality and discrimination, and reject and challenge any form of it
- Support and develop anti-oppressive policies and practices
- Respect, value, support and promote the value of difference and diversity
- Promote and support diverse communities to agree on their common concerns and interests
- Acknowledge the diverse nature of society and seek to understand and support others to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression of marginalised communities and minorities.

4.2. **Social Justice**

Increasing social justice is an essential aim of the Forum's work. It involves identifying and seeking to alleviate structural disadvantage and promoting strategies for overcoming exclusion, discrimination and inequality.

The Forum will work with individuals, communities and organisations towards a more equal society, in ways which:

- Recognise that social justice includes environmental, political, cultural and economic elements
- Recognise and challenge inequalities and power differences
- Value diversity of experience
- Promote human and civil rights and responsibilities
- Promote a sustainable environment
- Challenge the underlying causes, and effects, of structural power imbalances
- Make the link between local, societal and global contexts.

4.3. **Collective Action**

The Forum will work with and support individuals and groups to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence in anti-discrimination practice, to identify and analyse issues which can be addressed through collective action, in ways which:

- Promote the participation of communities and their members
- Support communities' rights to organise, find support and take action
- Respect the rights of others when planning collective action
- Empower communities to recognise and acknowledge their existing skills, knowledge and expertise
- Use the collective voice and collective action to achieve its own goals



4.4. **Community Empowerment**

The Forum seeks the empowerment of individuals and communities through using their own strengths and skills to achieve the changes they desire. This is a process of mutual respect and genuinely equal partnerships between all involved. The Forum will engage with communities and organisations to work together in ways which:

- Promote the rights of communities to define themselves, their own priorities and agendas for action
- Encourage an understanding of and commitment to the long-term nature of anti-discrimination practice
- Promote the rights of communities to be consulted, involved in, and influence decision-making that affects their lives
- Promote accountability and transparency
- Promote co-operation to connect and strengthen communities
- Use reliable research to support communities in influencing policy and power.



4.5. Working and Learning Together

The Forum will support individuals and communities to work and learn together. This will be done in ways which:

- Recognise, share and value the skills, knowledge and experience of individuals and communities
- Promote empowerment through building on existing knowledge and skills
- Create opportunities for collective learning through sharing experiences of action.
- Encourage reflection on practice, values and beliefs
- Use analysis and evaluation to inform future action
- Promote learning from the experiences of local communities.

1. Membership

The Forum is a voice for its members, and for issues related to their communities, groups and organisations. Forum members will work together to identify and join together representation from all the diversity and equality communities in Shropshire. It will seek to increase membership by a series of network meetings.

2. Operations

- 2.1 The Forum will meet 4 times a year – making meetings available across the county to support rural groups;
- 2.2 The Forum has an elected Chairperson. The Chairperson will be subject to re-election every year;
- 2.3 In the event of absence each organisation/individual may send a suitable substitute to meetings;
- 2.4 The Equalities Forum will seek consensus in its decisions but if this is not possible decisions will be reached and recorded by majority decision;
- 2.5 Members of the Equalities Forum will have the responsibility to ensure two-way communication of news and briefings within their community and to the Partnership;
- 2.6 In compliance with the Data Protection Act the Forum Administrator will maintain and keep up-to-date a database of Forum members and other associated contracts.

