

# Equality Partnership

## Terms of Reference March 2022

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These Terms of Reference are reviewed every 2 years and amended if agreed by the Equality Team.

### Overview and Purpose of the Partnership

Sheffield City Council established the Equality Partnership in 2020 to support the engagement and influence of under-represented groups of people in Sheffield – people who have felt excluded and/or discriminated against, face additional barriers and who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

The Partnership enables communities of identity the opportunity to make the city's decision makers aware of the issues which they face, which have a direct impact on them, and to noticeably influence the decisions that are made in the city. It is key in helping to achieve Sheffield's ambition to become a more equitable, diverse and inclusive city.

It also plays a role in helping to deliver the Council's and other organisations' Public Sector Equality Duty.

### Who Can Join the Partnership?

The Sheffield Equality Partnership is open to any individual/ group who is interested in Equality, Diversity and Fairness. The Partnership brings together individuals and organisations from all sectors- voluntary, community and faith (VCF) public and private- to make a real difference in Sheffield.

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of the Equality Partnership are to:

- actively support and engage with communities of identity, to ensure issues are heard, understood and responded to.
- provide an open and welcoming environment for communities of identity to work together on issues of concern, providing constructive challenge whilst celebrating diversity.
- support communities of identity to take part in consultation and engagement activities, share experiences, identify common concerns and work together to develop solutions.
- involve communities of identity in influencing decisions across the city, including how Council and its partners' services are planned and delivered.

- support the Council and its partner organisations to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty by raising issues relating to equality, diversity and fairness and providing constructive challenge to help overcome barriers.
- to work in collaboration with the Equality Team to empower marginalised groups across the city, and build on best practice.
- campaign on key equality issues of concern in a non-party political way and to raise awareness about discrimination, social exclusion and prejudice in our city.

## 2. Structure and Working Models

The groups were established broadly around the protected characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Partnership currently consists primarily of the following seven groups:

- Age (intergenerational)
- BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, Refugee)
- Carers
- Disability (all impairments)
- LGBT+(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, other sexual orientations and gender identities)
- Religion/Belief/No Belief
- Women's

There are also other meetings and events arranged on behalf on and involving the Partnership.

The groups provide a mechanism for **engagement** and influence across the city. They are informal networks that use a range of techniques and approaches to gather views and involve people across Sheffield. This includes online, social media, meetings and events. They look at topics of concern and organise and promote consultation and engagement activities. They can also set up working groups and events as and when to look at issues in more detail. They work to make positive change and promote Equality across the city.

Sheffield City Council and the Equality Team encourages cross Partnership building on commonalities and sharing good practice. The Equality Team acts as the strategic body for the Partnerships, considering issues in the city and providing a route for problem solving and escalation of issues to Sheffield City Council and its partners.

The Partnership is currently accountable to Sheffield City Council for progress as the primary funder at this time.

## 3. Principles

Our principles are embedded in the work of the groups.

- |               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| ● Inclusivity | ● Participation          |
| ● Diversity   | ● Constructive challenge |
| ● Equality    | ● Respect                |
| ● Fairness    | ● Action orientated      |

The Partnership is non-party political in nature, although individuals may be members of political parties.

In line with our principles, due consideration should always be given to groups members’ access, communication and support needs. This includes sign language interpreters, induction loops, personal assistants and information in alternative formats and accessibility of meeting rooms as well as other access issues

## 4. Equality Groups

### 4.1 Activity (including meetings and events)

The groups use a wide range of approaches to engagement and influence. They can choose to work as an individual group or to work across multiple groups within the Partnership. They can also choose to set up a Working Group or a Cross Group Working Group (involving people from different groups) to look at a topic in more detail. Each area of work for the Group or cross Group activity has a designated lead person who takes responsibility for delivery of the activity. The Groups should guard against unnecessary systems and instead focus on discussion, awareness raising and action. They must be mindful of capacity to deliver and should not set unrealistic expectations.

### 4.2 Setting priorities and planning

Every year Partnership Groups will work collaboratively and strategically with a member of the Equality Team to set their groups’ priority issues to meet the needs of SCC, their Partnerships and the citizens of Sheffield. A group action plan will be produced based on these agreed priority issues. This will outline the activities that will be undertaken in terms of gathering voice and influence on the Group’s priority issues and will identify how success will be measured.

### 4.3 Agendas and notes

The issues considered by the Groups reflect the Group’s agreed priorities for the year as outlined in the Group Action Plan. However at times, Groups exercise flexibility in order to discuss new or arising topics.

### 4.4 Membership/Involvement

The Sheffield Equality Partnership aims to provide an open and welcoming environment for all, and encourages cross partnership working. Involvement is based on a person’s self-identification, as outlined in the table below:

Sheffield Equality Partnership	Who can be involved?
Age Partnership	Anyone interested in issues related to age and aging (This partnership group is intergenerational.)
BAMER Partnership	Anyone interested in issues affecting Sheffield’s BAMER (Black Asian, Minority Ethnic, Refugee) communities

<b>Carers' Partnership</b>	Anyone interested in issues around Carers
<b>Disability Partnership</b>	Anyone interested in disability issues (The Disability Partnership covers all impairments.)
<b>LGBT+ Partnership</b>	Anyone interested in issues affecting the LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, other sexual orientations and gender identities) community
<b>Religion/Belief/ No Belief Partnership</b>	Anyone interested in issues around religion or belief (including no religious belief)
<b>Women's Partnership</b>	Anyone who self identifies as a woman.

People can be involved in the activities of more than one Partnership, as they strive to be as diverse and inclusive as possible, recognise intersectionality and to involve people from all walks of life.

#### **4.5 Conduct**

All Partnerships will follow the Code of Conduct ( Please see Appendix A).

#### **4.6 Partnership Representatives and Meeting Etiquette. (see Code of Conduct)**

Partnership Representatives act as the key link between their Group and the Equality Team, feeding back on activities, raising any issues for escalation and ensuring the Equality Team is aware of the work of the Group. A Group Representative represents the different views of their group members, rather than their own personal opinion. Where it is a personal opinion, this should be stated.

If a Group Representative is unable to attend a Sheffield Partnership Meeting, they must arrange for another group member to deputise for them, and if no one is available they must notify the Equality Team.

Group representatives are expected to establish positive working relationships with other Partnership Representatives and Group members. Groups can also work together on issues of joint concern. This can be through one-off events or through an ongoing Cross Partnership Working Group which meets over a period of months to look at a topic in more detail.

## 5. Equality Team and SCC Support.

Sheffield City Council's Equality Team acts as the strategic body for the Partnership, considering strategic issues in the city and providing a route for problem solving and escalation of issues to the Council and its partners. The Team also provides support in terms of identifying and helping meet training needs of the SEP and associated groups. The Team offers advice and guidance on equality and diversity, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Sheffield City Council currently provides the funding and support for the SEP. Funding is primarily allocated to **support engagement** and to enable the running of the Partnership Groups.

The Team manages the SEP membership list, website and Twitter account. The Team also actively promotes the work of the SEP within the Council and with partner organisations. The Team also provides a policy regarding when and to whom expenses can be provided. They also provide reasonable adjustments when required.

### 5.1 Funding

With the exception of the Carers' Partnership which has a separate voice and influence arrangement, each Partnership Group is coordinated by a Group that is identified through a competitive grant tendering process. The annual grant usually ranges from £10,000 to £15,000 and grants are agreed for a 3 year period.

The Partnership Groups focus on the following areas for each community of identity:

- Encouraging the involvement of a wide range of people in the Partnership, especially the most marginalised.
- Promoting the Partnership and the Equality Team in the city and wider.
- Joint working with other Partnerships, including events and activities.
- Raising awareness of issues relating to equality, diversity and fairness.
- Feeding the views of the partnerships and groups into both the Equality Team and citywide consultations .
- Running events that raise awareness of the Partnership Groups and related activity.
- Supporting the Partnership Representatives to play an active role in Partnership meetings and to feed back to their groups.
- Providing administrative support to the Partnership and Working Groups as agreed.

## 6. Reporting

Partnerships Groups will use their yearly action plan to feedback to the Equality Team quarterly, and at the end of the year produce a short annual report. **(devise annual report so streamlined)** The Equality Team will then collate these and write a short annual report to present to the Partnership, celebrating successes and identifying gaps for development which will inform future planning.