



Annual Report 2016/17



*Promoting equality and diversity,
dignity and respect
through inclusion.*

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Equality Action

Over the years I have been a great advocate of improving race relations across the board. So, when as Mayor, I attended multi faith events in Charnwood, it came as no surprise to me that the leaders of all the groups represented, would appear to have more in common than they had differences.

Thankfully, under the aegis of what is now known as 'Equality Action', they support each other in addressing common problems and potential problems, and seek peaceful solutions. The amount of respect shown by the various groups in those deliberations gives us all hope for the future.

Because of the importance I place in these issues, I intend to maintain my involvement with Equality Action now my Mayoral period has ceased. I hope and pray that we will continue to strive for peaceful outcomes to all our concerns.

Councillor David Gaskell
Mayor of Charnwood 2016/17

Data protection

Your name and address may be stored electronically for the sole purpose of contacting you about Mayoral events. If you would prefer us not to retain Your contact details please tell us or tick the box and return this letter

Telephone: 01509 263151 Email: information@charnwood.gov.uk

Visit us at www.charnwood.gov.uk



Chair's Report

The past year has seen some major changes for our organisation, mainly the change in identity from Human Rights and Equalities Charnwood to Equality Action. This came about as a result of a review of the organisation by an external consultant which was funded by a Capabilities Grant received from the Big lottery (see report page 6). We are very excited about this change of brand and I'm sure I speak for all board members and staff when I say we are optimistic and hopeful about the future.



Our 'Improving Lives' men's project has completed a successful first year and I know this is making a real difference to the men it is working with. We are in the final year of the our women's project "Chances For All". The project has achieved great successes and we are seeking a 3 year extension. Both of these projects have been funded by The Big Lottery and I am very proud of the great outcomes both projects are achieving.

We continue to be a strategic partner of Charnwood Borough Council and deliver short term Debt and Money Management Programmes advising local people on how better to manage their finances. We also work closely with Loughborough Citizen's Advice Bureau and other local stakeholders in a consortium of local voluntary and community organisations. Our view is this partnership working is vital to help develop our communities.

Our voluntary casework continues on a two day a week appointments basis, and I would like to thank Chayara Chowdhury, Amina Wadud and Kazi Mashud who give their time so generously to meet the ever increasing needs of the community. This service is invaluable and helps the lives of so many local residents.

Our European work continues successfully delivering training events to young people from across Europe and Charnwood on equality and human rights issues. We are not sure of how this work will fare post Brexit but it is a very exciting area of our work and I hope we can continue with it. I would particularly like to thank Nadja Rein for her dedication to this valuable work, it really does bring communities together.

We have also begun a new way to recruit trustees, using a more formal approach and I'm hopeful we will have a successful recruitment process.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all board members for their dedication and enthusiasm, it really is a pleasure to work with all of them. I would also like to thank Trevor Shaw who is our treasurer and his commitment to the organisation continues to astound me. I would also like to make a special mention to Varsha Parmar, our Executive Officer. Varsha is pivotal to the success of Equality Action and for that I am very grateful.

Finally I must express our sincere thanks to all our funders, Charnwood Borough Council, the Big Lottery Fund and the British Council (Erasmus Plus) for supporting our work and the generous grants that have enable us to continue our work.

Justin O'Brien

Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to be able to present a satisfactory financial report to this year's Annual General Meeting to approve (hopefully!).

Our balance sheet is reasonably healthy and the range of "open" projects shows the breadth of our work – from casework to cook books!

As far as our casework goes, after a few years of uncertainty about our ability to meet the needs of the people who look to us for support, it is gratifying that our volunteer caseworkers have not lost their appetite for hard work. It is interesting that the numbers of folk coming through our door day by day for help remains ever constant.

I was able to present a budget to the Board for 2017/18 that shows we will keep our head above water until March 2018. But after that we will have to work hard.

Our current strategic partnership agreement with Charnwood Borough Council, through which we get valuable funding, ends March 2018 and I hope we will be able show them that the range and quality of our work warrants a new agreement.

I am pleased that we had the ability to respond decisively to the Big Lottery Capability funding – long live EQUALITY ACTION!

Wherever it is appropriate we make bids so we can deliver new services. This means we enter a very competitive field where funders look carefully at bidders' abilities to deliver effectively. So it was good that we recently won a £9k contract to provide pre- ESOL English language learning to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women.

Once again thanks go to our accountants and auditors Duncan & Toplis Limited for the service they give us, with special mention of Martin Shannon who is moving to pastures new.

And Varsha thanks for all you do!!!

Trevor Shaw



Capabilities Grant - Big Lottery Fund

As part of our new Big Lottery Improving Lives project we have received funding to review and improve the core governance and running of our organisation.

The first part of this, the external review, was carried out by an external agency, Co-operative and Social Enterprise (CASE). This involved interviewing trustees, staff, volunteers, stakeholder, funder, partner agencies and beneficiaries. The aim was to gather views on how we operate and are perceived, and to help us identify what our future direction should be.

Following the review, several recommendations were highlighted including the health & safety of the building, fire system, training for staff and trustees, review of our policies and most importantly our image.

It was evident from the review that our name “Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood “ often gave a misleading image of what we could deliver. Trustees revisited the mission statement and agreed to rebrand as “EQUALITY ACTION”.

We have now a brand new website, new image and are moving forward to making the organisation stronger and more focused. We want to be seen as a more campaigning and influencing body, as well as listening to the needs of our communities and delivering vital services to meet those needs.

This year we have recruited trustees more formally, following a skills audit. We are still keen to find people with expertise and experience in business and financial knowledge.

Our new website is www.equalityaction.org.uk please have a browse.



Our new Mission Statement is

*Promoting equality and diversity,
dignity and respect through inclusion.*

Advice Work

Thanks to our volunteer ex-caseworkers, we have continued to give advice and information to our clients 3 days a week. In the last year we have dealt with 555 queries/cases.



Nature of cases/queries	Total
Welfare Benefits	235
Housing and Accommodation	115
Immigration and Nationality	65
Training and Education Support	15
Employment related	45
Miscellaneous Support	80
Total Cases/Queries	555

Our
ex-caseworkers
continue giving
advice on a voluntary
basis.



Debt and Money Management work

We delivered this work 2 days a week from August 2016 to March 2017 on behalf of Charnwood Borough Council. During the period we saw 80 people with debt problems (in some cases people need more than one appointment to deal with the matter and have to come back several times, some up to 5 - 6 visits over the last 8 months). Where possible, our caseworkers helped identify ways the client could avoid debt issue arising in the future and worked with them to set up budgets, manage their income better and set up direct debits for regular payments. In some cases we had to refer the client to Citizen's Advice Bureau for more specialist advice.

Mr X had problems with his personal loan which he couldn't pay back. Due to the arrears he was in the danger of losing his home and was very stressed, not knowing how to deal with it. He has a young family and was very worried that things were escalating to crisis point. He doesn't speak any English and didn't know how to access mainstream debt advice.

He came to us and we helped him negotiate a payment plan with the bank which was more affordable. We helped him prioritise his expenditure, work out a budget and cut back on his expenses.

Quoting Mr X "without Equality Action's help I would have ended up losing my home and face severe health problems. I couldn't sleep and didn't know how to stop the debt escalating. I have young children and I was feeling depressed at the thought of our future. Now I am in a much better position and dealing with my debt. I can't thank enough the Equality Action staff who are there to help people like me".

Improving Lives Project (ILP)

Our Improving Lives Project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund is now in year 2.

The 3 objectives of the project are:

- Black Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) men have improved health, wellbeing, confidence to be more active in society and ability to deal with family issues.
- BAME men have increased their employability skills through IT and language training and accessing further education
- BAME men have increased their knowledge, awareness and built their resilience against radicalisation and extremism

Hate Crime Awareness Event

In an effort to raise awareness of what hate incidents are and how to report them, we organised an event on 11th October 2016 in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire Police.

We had over 40 local men attending, many of whom are taxi drivers. They were able to share concerns over some the hate abuse they receive and learn about how to report and what support is available.



Information & Communications Technology (ICT) sessions

We delivered 10 sessions on ICT in July 2016 at Loughborough Library. This helped the men, some of whom had never used a computer before. They can search for jobs online, set up an e-mail accounts and use them to communicate. As not many could come to set sessions due to their other commitments, we offer 1-2-1 sessions in the office.



Swimming Sessions

10 sessions of men only swimming were held from July to September 2016 at Charnwood College. 21 men participated and thoroughly enjoyed learning to swim. This also provided them with an opportunity to make new friends, often men from other cultures and faiths. This proved very popular and we have planned more swimming sessions in year two.

Health Event



A health event was held on 27th October, 2016. Relevant health organisations came to share information and promote their services. Over 50 people from different ages and backgrounds attended the event.

They gained information and awareness on a range of health issues and with the help of professionals became more aware of certain types of conditions that affect BAME people including diabetes. They were given advice on the symptoms and ways of preventing this. They were shown how to do regularly blood pressure checks. There was also general information on mental health, this often being a subject that many people often do not even acknowledge as a condition.

Our thanks to the Charnwood Borough Council "Charnwood Active" team and other professionals that supported our event.

Houses of Parliament trip

We organised a trip to the Houses of Parliament on 14th November 2016. 50 men from BAME background visited this for the first time and had the opportunity to meet our local MP Nicky Morgan. It was a very enjoyable trip and many new friendships were formed.



Football Tournament

Our first Seven-A-Side football tournament took place on 29th January, 2017. 12 teams from different cultures and backgrounds came together with over 80 people attending. The tournament was highly successful and an opportunity for cross-cultural integration. This will be an annual event bringing men together through sports.



International Mother Language Day

In partnership with Bangladesh Social Association, an event to celebrate International Mother Language Day was organised on 28th February. This is a worldwide annual observance held on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.



Healthy Eating During Ramadan



An event organised to promote healthy eating during the month of Ramadan in partnership with the Community Health & Learning foundation and Rosebery Pharmacy. This event helped to build awareness on healthy lifestyle, healthy eating and importance of healthy diet during Ramadan. Our Big Lottery Grant officer Steve Lakin, attended and was able to see first hand the work of the project as well as meeting the beneficiaries and staff.

One to One Information & Community Technology (ICT) and driving theory sessions

One to one driving theory lessons on the highway code and ICT have started from April 2017. Lessons are being tailored to match participants' need. Participants can choose suitable time for their sessions and also can use their own laptop and devices.



"I am glad to learn how to use my own laptop, it will help me to work at home without any help from others."

- M S Rahman (ICT Learner)



Chances for All Project

The aims of the project in year 5.

- A women's forum strongly established with 20 South Asian Women (SAW) representing all generations and backgrounds leading on their continued empowerment.
- 20 SAW on community, voluntary bodies having a voice to make a difference.
- A forum set up to apply for funding for independent work identified as needs by the women.

Swimming



We are working in partnership with our local council's sports development team. They are running various sport and fitness activities especially for women. We have been promoting these events to our beneficiaries and taking a lead on the swimming sessions.

There have been over 40 participants and the numbers are growing each week. Due to the popularity of the sessions, the council have managed to book a further 20 sessions. The ages ranges of the women are between 16- 86 and most have commented on how beneficial they are finding it for their health.

Quoting one woman "I have never been in a pool in this country, only remember as a child playing in a pond back in Bangladesh, never imagined I would learn to swim here".

We have been working with Leicestershire and Rutland Sport (LRS) to encourage women to become sports leaders.

The 'Take the lead' project targets women working in diverse environments and empower them to further develop skills as sports leaders or coaches. They provide mentors to inspire and support and identify the right course/workshops.

Two events were held to introduce the project and give women the opportunity to sign up for courses in their desired sport. The event was attended by 25 women.

The women who train in becoming leaders will be able to deliver sessions to their groups and community.

Take the Lead



Pre English as Second Language (ESOL) classes

We have been supporting local women's group to deliver pre ESOL classes to local Bangladeshi and Arab women. Most of these women have no or very little English and lack the confidence to join mainstream ESOL classes.

The teaching is fun, flexible and works on the individuals needs. The progress the women are making is tremendous, they are gaining confidence and skills to become more independent and take charge of sorting their affairs. Things like booking a doctor's appointment or reporting their child sick was something they struggled to do but are now finding it easier to do. We have also successfully secured funding from Good Things Foundation "English My Way" programme to continue this work until March 2018.



Basic pre-ESOL sessions at Fearon Hall for Arabic speaking women.

Below sessions at Bangladesh Social Association for Bengali speaking women.



Driving theory

The driving theory lessons have been ongoing since year four as we had great success since starting. Many of our women who wouldn't otherwise feel confident in even thinking about driving due to the fact that they wouldn't pass the driving theory test due to their lack of English.

We have seen lots of successes this year with two women passing their driving theory tests and another five women feeling confident that they are ready for taking their tests in the near future. All the women have had the practice theory app downloaded on either their phones or iPads and are encouraged to keep practicing the mock tests on a regular basis.



Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based violence (Dash) training

Eight local BAME women attended this training. The session was very interactive and informative with lots of activities, case studies and risk assessment.

All the women who participated in the DASH training feel confident that they would be able to successfully carry out the DASH risk assessment with any potential victims. Three of the women who attended the training have joined Living Without Abuse as volunteers and are doing between 5 to 10 hours of volunteering work per week. We are very pleased with this as there are often cultural barriers for women from BAME backgrounds seeking help when facing domestic violence.



Mental Health First Aid

Mental health is a taboo subject in most communities, particularly in BAME. It has always been a difficult subject to broach and often people are reluctant to acknowledge it exists or even don't know there is such a condition.

Our project over the last 5 years have been trying to raise awareness of this and although we have delivered workshops and information sessions there is a lot more to be done. Together with some local groups some funding has been secured from Charnwood Borough Council to training local BAME people in becoming mental health first aiders. They would be in a position to identify and help those suffering in the community and try to get them to seek professional help. They could also then become champions and help raise awareness. The first lot of training was set up and 10 local men and women from black & minority ethnic backgrounds took part.

All 10 attendees feel that they have increased in their knowledge and feel confident enough to carry out initial assessments in order and to encourage people to seek professional help.



Dementia Awareness workshop

We used the Eid celebration to raise awareness of dementia. A group of women from the Alzheimer's Society came to see our Bangladeshi women's group to deliver a workshop to explain symptoms of dementia and what signs to look out for. The session was very interactive and the women had an opportunity to ask questions and find out what support is available locally. It was a surprise to all that dementia doesn't just affect the elderly. Following the workshop the women had an opportunity to enjoy food and celebrate Eid. The women from the Alzheimer's Society joined in too.

Bangladeshi Women's Group

A group was set up in October 2016 particularly for the Bangladeshi women to empower them to lead and manage the group on a regular basis. This has offered them a platform to meet on a weekly basis and learn new skills from each other e.g. chair based yoga, needle craft, gardening skills, making homemade beauty treatments etc. These sessions have also been used to hold workshops on various topics on issues they are facing. Currently we have 20 women attending regularly.

Charnwood Chai

A group of local women came up with the idea that as “a cuppa tea” is usually the answer to sorting problems out, they would set up a “Charnwood Chai” group. Post Brexit, we have seen an increase in community tensions and hate crime and we believe if we can get people to come together in social environments they will see that we all have more in common than that which divides us. Charnwood Chai comes together at many different community events and works on a donation bases. Charnwood Chai was launched at the Loughborough Mela 2016 and has been growing in strength. They have served free cups of Indian tea to over 100 people at the last few events. Most people left a generous donation and they have ended up collecting nearly £50 in donations.



Health fair and healthy cooking session with Community Health & Learning (CHL) Foundation

CHL delivered a number of health cooking sessions to our women to raise awareness of diabetes and blood pressure. They shared information on how to make healthy food choices, how to measure accurate portion sizes and what a balanced meal is. The women better understand the importance of healthy eating coupled with regular exercise, a minimum of 3 times a week for at least 30 minutes. At least 5 small walking groups of 6 to 10 women have been established.

Healthy Cookbook

Following our healthy cooking sessions in Year 3 and 4, we are in the process of creating a local healthy cookery book with recipes the women have cooked. We will be launching this healthy cook book at the AGM on the 12th of July.

Minara Rahman & Yesmin Choudhury
Project Officers

Entrepreneurship Laboratory

April 2016 - April 2017

This long term training programme provided a platform for young people with entrepreneurial ideas allowing them to increase their confidence and competence while exploring the planning and launching of their own businesses and promoting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

32 participants acquired knowledge, skills and support network to help them when opening and/or developing their ventures. The participants now understand the meaning of entrepreneurship and how to build entrepreneurship culture, how to analyse business environment, how to recognize opportunities and generate business ideas, what is a business plan and how to develop a strategic vision, how to design a financial strategy and get local and European funds for a start up.

The project helped some of the participants to make a step forward and set up their ventures and helped others to accept that their ideas were not business ready yet. It helped the participants to build their confidence and also recognize weaknesses, showing ways to turn them into strengths as well as introduced to a network of skills and knowledge by peers, partitions and specialists.

One of the success stories is a story of a girl who opened her business during the course and now quoted her job and concentrate fully on her business venture:

<https://www.facebook.com/burrlatvia/>



Among the best activities the participants named the team building at Beaumanor Hall - Night trail, Dragon's Den like event at Loughborough Student Union (LSU) with Dragons offering their advice from Santander Bank, Loc8me, LSU, the Crop Club and Inform You; the networking breakfast at Oakley Grange organic Farm and a challenge day but highly appreciated the baggage of knowledge they got through the whole programme.

Participants getting to know each other.

Night trail



Visit to the Swaminarayan Temple Leicester

Nadja Rein - Project Co-ordinator

Bollywood Fund Raising Meal

24th January 2017

We hosted a fundraising meal at the Taste of India where over 45 people attended. We raised over £400 and the evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Our thanks to the restaurant for the delicious food and excellent service.



High Sherriff of Leicestershire Professor Surinder Sharma's visit to our offices

27th March 2017



Tony and Dilys Payne's Climb

25th May 2017

EqualityAction Fundraising Challenge for Dilys and Tony

May 25th 2017 – this challenge was to raise funds for EqualityAction (formerly HumanRights&Equalities Charnwood) in Loughborough, Leicestershire UK. Dilys and Tony climbed Cadair Idris, Gwynedd, North Wales (it was Dilys' first full mountain climb after cancer treatment in 2015). Total climb 850 metres, total distance walked 12 kilometres.



On the way up – half the climb done

Summit, Extension ridge-walk, Descent, Return



Relief – the temperature reached 28 C



Report it Don't stay silent about hate crime

21st March 2017

We know that hate incidents and hate crime are underreported and often people are not aware of what support is available or how to report. With the current climate following tragic events in London and Manchester, there is more and more need to reassure individuals and communities who may be facing hate crime or abuse.

Equality Action in partnership with The Race Equality Centre (TREC) and Northamptonshire Equality & Rights Council (NREC) secured some funds under the East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium (EMREC) to hold local and a regional event on raising awareness of hate crime and reporting. In partnership with Charnwood Borough Council, Community Safety teams, the Monitoring Project based at Leicestershire County Council, the police and other agencies we hosted a networking event which provided an opportunity for local people to find out more. Our thanks to all those who helped make this event successful.

This will be followed by a regional event in Leicester on Saturday 21st October 2017 from 11am to 2pm with key speakers and a panel to talk about concerns and how to address them. Please contact us to book your place. Details to follow in the near future.



Presentation on hate crime by staff at the Monitoring Project, Leics County Council.





Loughborough Mela has risen in prominence from a small event celebrating the town's cultural and ethnic diversity into a popular and important date in the calendar of the summer festival season. Taking place in Town Centre in the heart of the community of Loughborough, there is more to Loughborough Mela than just music- the event also features stalls, fairground rides, diverse range of food, children's activities and a diverse entertaining programme. The aim is to ensure that all visitors, young and old, will find something to entertain at this free event.

The Mela is a partnership event organised by Charnwood Borough Council, Equality Action, John Storer Charnwood, Charnwood Arts and local community groups and individuals. It is the perfect place to experience South Asian arts and culture in all its diverse and colourful forms, from spectacular Bollywood dancing to storytelling, poetry and henna painting. The aim is to both celebrate the performers' national heritage as well as their more recent history as British citizens.

Melas originate from the Indian sub-continent (the word 'Mela' means 'to meet' in Sanskrit, the ancient Indian language), where they are traditionally a gathering of people celebrating their community, much like village fairs in Britain.



R & R dancers with an artist.

This year's Mela is on Sunday 13th August in Loughborough Town Centre, Market Square, from 12 noon to 5 pm.

For more information, to book a stall or to get involved including volunteering please contact us on:

loughboroughmela@gmail.com
tel 01509 261651.

This is a community event and we need your support.



Board of Trustees

OFFICERS

Chair	Justin O'Brien
Vice chair	Abida Akram
Treasurer	Trevor Shaw
Company secretary	Linda Foukes

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Tony Payne	Justin O'Brien

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Yesmin Choudhury	Chances For All Project Officer
Kazi Mashud	Improving Lives Project Officer
Mehraj Alamgir	Improving Lives Project Officer
Kazi Mashud	Volunteer Adviser
Chayara Chowdhury	Volunteer Adviser
Amina Wadud	Volunteer Adviser
Nadja Rein	Youth Project Co-ordinator

Membership 2016/2017

Hon President
The Mayor of Charnwood

Hon Vice President
Dr A Strachan

Hon Solicitor
Mr D Pagett-Wright (Moss Solicitors)

Hon Treasurer
Mr T Shaw

Individual Members

A Akram	Y Ali	A Bava	J Capleton	J R Catt
V Clark	H Clegg	S Cramer	D Featonby	A Gimpel
A Gimpel	J Hayes	M Jenkinson	M Jones	P Joyce
R Kershaw	V Lewin	P Lewis	G Maffioli	J Miah
N Morgan	B Newton	J O'Brien	J Pacheco	S Phipps
T Priestley	M Shahid	T Shaw	N Shukla	V Silva
P Singh	S M Velado	J Vincent	A Williams	

Organisations

All Saints with Holy Trinity	P Pinder	D Green
Ashmount School	D Deacon	
Brahma Kumari	M Sisodia	N Steel
Bridge	P Snape	P Davey
Charnwood Arts	K Ryan	
Charnwood Borough Council	T Parton	P Ranson
	J Tassell	S Maynard-Smith
Falcon Centre	M Mooney	M Davies
Geeta Bhawan	R Chhabra	
Gorse Covert Community Centre	V Watts	L Gilmore
John Storer Charnwood	S Leong	S Frost
Limehurst Academy	J Mellor	
L'boro Baptist Church	S Cramer	
L'boro Churches Partnership	D Beale	T Payne
L'boro Constituency Labour Party	M Draycott	J Vincent
L'boro Council of Faiths	N Steele	
L'boro United Reformed Church	D Beale	T Payne
L'boro University	A Akram	M Alonso
L'boro University		
(Centre for Faith & Spirituality)	J Sutton	
Rawlins Academy	C Ore	H Fern
Rosebery St Peter's C C	D Bentley	L Foukes
Sikh Temple	L Assi	
Swaminarayan BAPS Sanstha	M Sutaria	A Mistry

Our contact details



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We would like to thank all our funders for the generous grants that enable us to continue with our work

