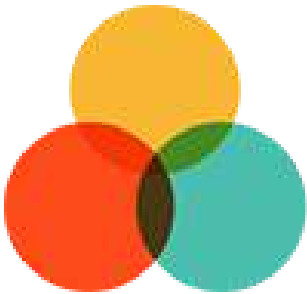


ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2022
2023



equality
action

Registered Charity Number: 1088411
Company Number: 4198889

ALL DIFFERENT

ALL EQUAL

PROMOTING

EQUALITY AND

DIVERSITY,

DIGNITY AND

RESPECT

THROUGH

INCLUSION.

CONTENTS

CHAIR'S REPORT	02
TREASURER'S REPORT	04
OUR VALUES	05
OUR PROJECTS	06- 17
PUBLIC LECTURE	18
LOUGHBOROUGH MELA	19
OUR STAFF/ OUR TRUSTEES	20
THANK YOU	21
MEMBERS	22
NOTE FROM EXECUTIVE OFFICER	23
OUR YEAR IN PICTURES	24

Chair's Report

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.”

– Maya Angelou, American writer and civil rights activist.



It is this rich tapestry of multi-coloured threads that Equality Action has and is constantly striving to create for over 50 years. We have a proud history of delivering a variety of projects to create a level playing field for people in the community who come from very diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, living in and around Loughborough.

With the support, generosity, and trust of our funders like the National Lottery Community Fund, Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council, Rank Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Community Justice Foundation, Vita Health Group, the NHS and many others, Equality Action has consistently delivered projects which have exceeded expectations in terms of the outcomes and impact on the beneficiaries.

Our staff have to be commended for all their hard work in delivering a wide range of projects which have had and are continuing to have a very positive impact on the members of the communities we serve. Details have been provided by our project leads.

Since our last AGM in 2022, Equality Action is proud to share the news of some key events such as the annual lecture organised in partnership with Loughborough University.

The thought provoking topic was Violence Against Women and Girls delivered very sensitively by the keynote speaker, Meena Kumari, founder and director of H.O.P.E. consultancy. She was joined by members from Leicestershire police and director of Living Without Abuse.

Another highlight was a young women's project in collaboration with Loughborough Female Fitness group. It was an inspiring afternoon to meet the young women at the end of project awards ceremony. August saw the return, after Covid, of the colourful Mela in the town centre. Grateful thanks to the staff and partners who worked extremely hard and pulled off a very successful day.

It is also time once again to celebrate the commitment, enthusiasm and energy of the members of staff and the Executive Officer Varsha Parmar.

Grateful thanks to my colleagues on the board for their willingness to actively support, share their expertise and give generously of their time. However, the work of Equality Action is never done, as the communities we serve face more challenges with the rising cost of living and its impact on family finances, health and well-being.

We want to assure the beneficiaries of our continued support, until such time as the rich multi-coloured tapestry is valued, respected and appreciated by one and all.

Geetha Bala
Chair

Treasurer's Report

I took over as the Treasurer of Equality Action in early 2023. I am a CIMA qualified accountant with over 20 years experience in working on various charity accounts.



Firstly, I would like to thank Trevor for all the hard work he has put into the accounts over the years. He is a really hard act to follow!

Since taking over, I have been on a steep learning curve. I have worked with Matthew to take over doing the payments and the wages from Varsha.

I have also set a budget for this financial year and assisted Varsha with grant applications. We are working on improving the financial reporting to the board so everyone can see the spending and income against budget and how the various grants are being used.

Generally, Equality Action is on a sound financial footing with a healthy levels of reserves. We are working on securing more grants to fund our casework over the next few years.

I look forward to learning more and working with the other trustees to strengthen Equality Action as we go into 2024.

Rachel Thorpe
Treasurer

Our Values



**We are
Passionate
about what
we do.**



**Teamwork:
Achieving
more
together**



**Integrity:
Honest,
transparent,
and respectful
to all.**



**We are
Committed to
equity,
diversity, and
inclusion.**



**Accountable:
We do what
we say.**



**Inclusiveness:
Our Services
are accessible
to all**

Our Strategic Aims:

1

To support individual needs holistically by building long term sustainable partnerships to empower and enable our community to work together and celebrate diversity.

2

To develop an effective and efficient organisational structure by investing in our team to enable our people to flourish.

3

To ensure our systems and policies are robust and scalable to underpin our work and the organisation's development

4

To safeguard our organisation by ensuring financial stability and a sustainable approach to resourcing our work

OUR PROJECTS

Casework

The cost-of-living crisis has had a huge impact on our work during the year. We have seen clients coming to us from all backgrounds seeking help and support with the rising cost of utilities, fuel and interest rates. People are struggling with their finances and face issues with managing their budgets. The majority of cases we dealt with were on welfare benefits closely followed by immigration cases.

Although our caseworkers help deal with the immediate issues, these have a big impact on the well-being and mental health of our clients. Our Positive Minds and Vita Minds project officers work together with our caseworkers to holistically support the clients, making referrals for talking therapy, helping them to explore options for increasing their household income through upskilling and improving their employability (details in our Positive and Vita Minds reports).



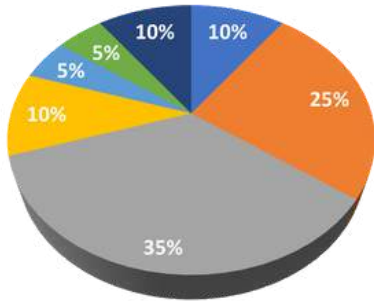
Cost of Living
Local support and
tips for managing



**Thanks for our caseworkers,
Chayara Chowdhury, Amina
Wadud, Kazi Mashud and
Minara Rahman for supporting
our clients through these
difficult times.**



OUR PROJECTS



Percentage Casework breakdown at a glance



MR. H's story

Mr. H of white British background aged 52 came to our office because his Personal Independence Payments (PIP) disability benefit had been refused. Mr. H suffers from Fibromyalgia, Rhinitis, Hypertrophic cardio myopathy, IBS, Depression and anxiety, chokes on own stomach acid, wakes up at night choking.

Due to covid and Mr. H's ongoing mental health issues he has not been able to see a doctor for over two years in person nor get any prescription drugs.

Through the help and support of Amina, one of the caseworkers, we have managed to get him seen by a doctor and he is on regular medication. We have also contacted PIP and put in a request for an appeal. Amina assisted Mr. H to draft a letter to his doctors to request his medical records, which was later sent to the tribunal in support of his PIP appeal along with a supporting letter from Equality Action.

In addition, Mr. H has been Referred to Vita Health for counselling, and social services for help with his care and mobility needs.

OUR PROJECTS

Our impact this past

350 year

group participants
across all projects



£600

generated in
donations

1450

cases supporting
clients with advice



95

referrals to NHS
Talking Therapies

Secured two new short term
projects during the year

OUR PROJECTS

Positive Minds

We are in the final year of our five-year Positive Minds Project aimed at women from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and the key aims are to:

- Raise awareness of mental health issues
- Help beneficiaries understand the symptoms and take up support.
- Improve their health and wellbeing
- Raise confidence in leading and running health activities, especially in 50 years plus women.
- Improve opportunities for employment, volunteering and further education.



Our thanks to the two project staff, Minara and Yesmin who have tirelessly worked with the ladies to help them achieve their goals .

OUR PROJECTS

Positive Minds Impact



women attend weekly exercise sessions including yoga and walking



women attend weekly swimming sessions



women attend weekly English classes



women have learnt to drive after getting support with their theory tests.



women found employment in education, care, and catering.



women set up small enterprises in tailoring and catering



women have taken on befriender roles



men and women have become community connectors on health matters (cancer, hypertension, respiratory, long covid).



women expressed feeling more comfortable talking about mental health

OUR PROJECTS

Positive Minds Impact

The impact so far has been on many levels, such as creating peer support and mutual self-help groups, greater self confidence, increased awareness of mental health issues and ability to access appropriate help and support. The women have created a culture of mutual support, respect, and empathy among themselves and as a result, they have started to create their own individual groups and are taking a lead in running them.

We enable them to access further help and support to explore new opportunities and interests, such as volunteering, education, or employment and as a result, more women are in paid employment than ever before.

Feedback from people we have supported:

"I am depressed at home looking after my in-laws who both have onset of dementia and aging illness, this is a wonderful place where I can come to just talk about my depression for a couple of hours a week, otherwise I've got nowhere else I can go"

"I have nowhere else to go that I can meet people who can speak my own language"

"I really look forward to coming to this session and unwinding every week. This is my safe place to talk about my feelings."

OUR PROJECTS

Core20 Plus Connectors

This is a partnership project funded by the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR-IBC) together with the South Asian Health Action (SAHA) and Shama Women's Group. We have been delivering the Core 20 Plus Connectors since April 2022. The clinical areas we are working on are early diagnosis of cancer, high blood pressure, respiratory disease and long covid.

Core 20 targets the most deprived 20% of the national population. Plus population groups that experience poorer than average health access, experience and/or outcomes. We are targeting our programme to reach the most deprived communities, including Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities.



We have recruited 10 community connectors who have lived experience of one/more of the clinical areas and work with us to raise awareness of the importance of seeking early medical help, screening and how to manage their conditions better. During the year, we have held over 20 events raising awareness amongst groups, with connectors sharing their lived experiences and helping to raise awareness. Clinicians and health professionals often attend the events to share information.

Minara Rahman (Co-ordinator)

OUR PROJECTS

Befrienders

Two of our key projects, Positive Minds and case work have provided us with a very positive unintended consequence and highlighted a major gap in the services provided. This led to gaining funding (from the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR-ICB) for the Befrienders project to deal with isolation, loneliness and depression in a culturally specific way. We currently have 5 befrienders who speak 4 Asian languages and are working with 10 individuals at present. We get referrals from family members and through other partners.

Mrs B's Story

Mrs B is a 80 year old Bangladeshi lady who is housebound and suffers from many health conditions. Although she lives in an extended family, due to everyone in the household being out all day, she is lonely and depressed as she can't go out by herself.

One of our befrienders visits her twice a week to spend time with her. They talk about things of interest, enjoy a cuppa and spend time together. Mrs B looks forward to these weekly visits and feels very happy to see the befriender.

Befriending scheme

Our befrienders offer friendly support

Feeling alone, down, isolated or just fancy a cuppa

Find out more about our befriending scheme: minara@equalityaction.org.uk

Support in English, Bengali, Hindi and Gujarati

Equality Action offering culturally appropriate befriending across Charnwood

equality action

**Yesmin Choudhury
Minara Rahman
Co-ordinators**

OUR PROJECTS

NHS Talking Therapy

We are one of the community partners of Vita Health Group, another five year project, to enhance access to Talking Therapy services throughout Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR), with a particular focus on individuals, especially those from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

Our project staff facilitate well being and creative activities in areas of high BAME populations, incorporating arts, crafts, music, and various creative methods to foster community cohesion and connection. The impact of these activities are the long-term benefits for the clients by reducing social isolation and raising awareness of resources available to support these wider communities. During the year we have held 35 sessions and events engaging with over 250 people across the city and county.

Through the engagement, they promote the talking therapies service and help with referrals to free NHS talking therapy services provided by Vita Health Group. These services are tailored to address lower-level mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, phobias, panic attacks, and more.

Our thanks to the three project staff, Anita, Chayara and Mehraj who work across the city and county to engage with groups and help with referrals to the NHS talking therapies .



OUR PROJECTS

NHS Talking Therapy

Health Event at Loughborough Wellbeing Centre

The Mental Health Week was marked by a successful health event at Loughborough Well-Being Centre on 15th May, 2023.

We had a range of health representatives and information stalls and activities with over 70 people from a mixed range of backgrounds, gender, ages and cultures attending. We received very positive feedback from both the attendees and the stall holders who said they had a lot of people wanting to know about their services and taking away leaflets and information.



“Such a prompt service, project officer contacted me in the morning and got my initial assessment call by that same afternoon for an appointment. Thanks to the NHS talking therapy project team.”

“The initiative to host holiday arts and crafts activities was not only creative but also highly engaging. It provided an excellent opportunity for us to spend quality time with our children while participating in enjoyable activities. The combination of arts and crafts with family involvement was a brilliant idea, and it created a warm and welcoming atmosphere.”

OUR PROJECTS

NHS Talking Therapy

Events, workshops & activity sessions



Arts & Crafts session



**Africa Day celebrations
at Documentary Media Centre**



**Mental Awareness
Event at DMU**



**Talking therapy
promotion at
Tesco store**



**Music Workshop
at Freedom Youth
Club**



**Health Event at Jamia
Masjid e Bilal**



**Mental Health Awareness
discussion with Leicester
Community Links CIC**

OUR PROJECTS

Young Womens Project

With grateful thanks to the Rank Foundation, Golden Awards Grant, following a successful youth apprentice project in 2022 working with young men, Loughborough Female Fitness group delivered a six month project with 25 young women during 2023.

The project provided the opportunity to practice all the skills listed below and has had a long-term impact on confidence levels and employability of these young women

Project focus areas

Skills development

Self-empowerment

Community initiative

Wellness

As part of the programme, they arranged a fund-raising event for 120 people where they raised nearly £2,000 for a good cause. The group showed entrepreneurship, creativity, and amazing enthusiasm in how they executed the event.



The young women thoroughly enjoyed taking part and showcased their achievements at an Awards ceremony in July, when the Mayor of Charnwood attended and presented them with certificates.

Public Lecture

“Violence Against Women & Girls” (VAWG), the community response to VAGW, engaging everyone in creating safe and supportive environments

Equality Action hosted its Annual Public Lecture on 21st June at Loughborough University. The topic was Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) but was inclusive across all genders. Our aim was to raise awareness with staff, students and community members and partner organisations and explore what actions need to be taken going forward.

Meena Kumari, of HOPE Training & Consultancy was our guest speaker and to give the evening a national and local context, several other keynote speakers, Manjit Atwal, Head of violence against women and girls project; Chris Baker, Leicestershire Police Detective Superintendent and Debbie Hughes, CEO of Living Without Abuse were part of the panel. A survivor shared their powerful story which was the highlight of the lecture followed by a Q&A session.

We would like to thank Loughborough University for hosting the lecture and the lovely pre-lecture reception.



Loughborough MELA '23

The Loughborough Mela is a celebration of unity, diversity, and inclusivity. It brings together people from different backgrounds, cultures, and walks of life, fostering a sense of togetherness and harmony within our community. We hosted the Mela on Sunday 13th August in Loughborough Town centre with over 5000 people attending the event. Thanks to Awards For All for the grant that made this event a possibility.



Quoting Varsha Parmar, Executive Officer, Equality Action and one of the Mela committee members, "this year was a true partnership effort with individuals, community groups, voluntary and statutory agencies coming together to plan and organise the Mela in months. The last Mela in town centre had been in 2019, just before the pandemic and it was a joy to see Loughborough's town centre with the vibrant event being enjoyed by all the diverse communities in Charnwood.



OUR STAFF & TRUSTEES

Our staff are pivotal in providing appropriate services for the needs of our clients and beneficiaries. They listen to people at grass root level and are part of the communities we serve, therefore understand first hand the issues that face them.



Our trustees play a vital role to ensure our organisation's governance is in line with the Charity Commission and Company House rules and we work to our mission, aims and objectives. They have been a great source of support for us throughout the year ensuring the well-being and safety of our staff, volunteers and clients.

Thank you!

To our supporters, funders and members for your support throughout the year.

Our funders

Charnwood Borough Council
Leicestershire County Council
The Access to Justice Foundation
The National Lottery Community Fund
The Rank Foundation
Vita Health Group
Awards For All
Community Foundation Leicestershire & Rutland
Lloyds Bank Foundation
NHS Commissioning Support Unit
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board

*Thank
you!*

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each individual who has contributed their time, financial resources, technology, or goods to support our efforts over the past year. Thank you for making a difference.

Members

Hon. President The Mayor of Charnwood

Hon. Solicitor Mr D Pagett-Wright (Moss Solicitors)

Hon. Treasurer Rachel Thorpe

Trustees

Bala G
Akram A
Hanif A
Vincent J
Yusuf Z
Vincent J
Mistry K
Keightley E
Adetutu O
Thorpe R
Smith B

Individuals

Bava A	Jones M
Catt J	Lewis D
Clark V	Lewis P
Clark A	Meredith Velado S
Cramer S	Morgan N
Dobbin C	Newton B
Gimpel Anthony	Shaw T
Gimpel Ann	Silva I V
Green D	
Bava A	

Organisations

Brahma Kumaris
The Bridge East Midlands
Charnwood Arts
Charnwood Borough Council
Falcon Support Services East Midlands LTD
Loughborough Wellbeing Centre CIO
Fearon Community Association
John Storer Charnwood

Loughborough Constituency
Labour Party
Loughborough Baptist Church
Loughborough College
Gurdwara Sahib Loughborough
Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPs)
Trinity Methodist Church

“

NOTE FROM VARSHA PARMAR EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It continues to be a challenging year with the cost of living following the pandemic.

Our team have risen to the challenges and have worked tirelessly to support those most disadvantaged in our locality.

We are working on our strategies with support from the Lloyds Bank Foundation, through consultants and excited to see the organisation go from strength to strength.

A massive thank you to our trustees (in particular my personal thanks to Geetha, our Chair and Rachel, our Treasurer), staff, volunteers, funders, partners and all stakeholders, without whose support we would not be doing this much needed work.



”

Our Year in Pictures





GET IN TOUCH



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