

Calderdale Equality Forum

Terms of Reference and Working Arrangements

1. Overall purpose

Calderdale Equality Forum aims to provide an opportunity for the views and needs of different communities of interest to be fed into the policy and service planning processes of statutory organisations within the district.

2. Objectives

- To make recommendations to the council and other public bodies in order to improve services delivered to all communities in Calderdale.
- To provide an opportunity to discuss equality and diversity issues with representatives from the council and other statutory bodies so that they can meet their equality obligations.
- To raise levels of awareness of the needs and barriers faced by Calderdale's different communities so that the ambition to make Calderdale a place where 'everyone is different and everyone matters' can become a reality.
- To provide a sounding board for new policy or service developments, before more detailed consultation as necessary.
- To acknowledge and build upon similarities between communities of interest as well as valuing difference in order to help strengthen community cohesion in Calderdale.

3. Membership

The membership of the Forum will be drawn from existing networks and organisations representing the following communities of interest.

Communities of interest	Numbers available
Age – older	5
Age – younger	3
Asylum Seekers/Refugees	3
Disability	
- Physical and sensory impairment	3
- Mental Health and Learning Difficulties	3
Gender – men	3
Gender – women	3
Narrowing the Gap	3
Newer communities	3

People with caring responsibilities	3
Race	3
Religion or Belief	3
Sexual Orientation	3
Transgender People	3

These organisations should be constituted and be registered on Voluntary Action Calderdale's database

Each organisation will put forward members they believe can commit to regular attendance at meetings. The people nominated should be a volunteer, service user or member of staff of the nominating organisation. Should there be an over subscription, a ballot process will follow that will be overseen by CMBC. The ballot will identify three core members plus two reserves for each of the communities of interest.

The successful nominees will constitute the core membership; (please see **4 – Attendance at Meetings** and **7 – Removal of Members**). All core members will have the right to vote at meetings. Once nominated to the Equality Forum members will remain in place for three years before their seat is eligible for re-election

This 'core' membership will be reviewed annually in May (post council elections) to ensure it remains representative of the different communities of interest across Calderdale as these are constantly changing.

Members are expected to prepare for meetings by reading any papers distributed prior to each meeting.

Members are expected to take an active role in each meeting by highlighting issues that are of particular relevance to the equality strand that they represent, however, it is also recognised that members may also have expertise in other areas.

Members are expected to remember that they are representing the views of the organisation and community they represent and as such are accountable to both. Equality Forum meetings are only open to the core membership.

Each year, the Forum will hold 1-2 open meetings per year which will operate on the basis of an open invite to members of the public with an interest in the work of the Forum and this should ensure that the range of perspectives within each community of interest can be adequately reflected. Public guests will not be entitled to vote.

4. Meetings

Meetings will be held six weekly in an appropriate and accessible venue.

Members are expected to attend each meeting or send their apologies prior to the date of the meeting. If a member has not attended a meeting three times in a row and has not offered their apologies, the Chair and Vice Chair will write to that member stating the dates of the meeting missed, referring them to the Terms of

Reference and advising them that their membership will be revoked if they do not attend the next meeting of the group or send an apology.

If a member continually offers their apologies for a total of six meetings concurrently, their membership will be terminated.

Once a member's position is vacant the relevant reserve will be invited to take up the position.

Meetings will be quorate if 25% of the members or proxy votes are present. If the meeting is inquorate decisions can be made but must be ratified at the next quorate meeting.

5. Officers

In order to support the overall purpose and objectives of the Equality Forum the meetings will be chaired by an independent person, supported by an independent Vice Chair, drawn from agencies that have an understanding of Calderdale and its communities.

The Equality Forum will draw up a list of independent agencies and then seek nominations from this list. Nominees will be forwarded from the independent agencies and the Chair and Vice Chair will then be elected by the Equality Forum core membership from the list provided.

The Chair and Vice Chair will serve for two years each. They will be eligible for re-election twice (six years service in total). Every two years new nominations will be sought from the independent agencies and elections will take place.

The Equality Forum, its Chair and Vice Chair will be supported by officers from the Council's Safer and Stronger Communities Directorate, who will ensure that the agenda and any associated papers are, where possible, despatched at least 10 days before each meeting.

6. Removal of Officers

The Chair and Vice Chair are able to step down from their positions at any time by resigning in writing at least one month before an Equality Forum meeting.

Equality Forum members are able to remove the Chair or Vice Chair from office by making the request in writing to the individual along with signatures from at least 20 members, or half the core membership, at least one month before an Equality Meeting.

When an officer resigns or is removed the vacant position will be filled by seeking new nominations and holding a ballot.

7. Removal of Members

Members are able to step down from their positions at any time by resigning in writing at least one month before an Equality Forum meeting.

Members may be asked to leave the Equality Forum if:

- s/he has failed to attend three meetings in a row without an apology (see above under “**6 – Attendance at Meetings**”
- s/he fails to abide by the rules under “**8 - Conduct of Meetings**” and that this is confirmed in writing by either the Chair and Vice Chair or five or more members

8. Conduct of meetings

The Chair will be responsible for ensuring that meetings are run in an orderly fashion, and making sure that all members are able to express their opinions freely and openly. When the Chair is unable to attend, this duty will fall to Vice Chair.

Similarly, members of the Forum are required to respect other members’ right to speak and express their particular opinions, even when they do not necessarily agree with them, whilst also ensuring they do not deliberately offend other members.

Meetings should be conducted under ‘Chatham House rules’, i.e. there should be a degree of confidentiality in that comments or views should not be attributed to named individuals, but simply recorded as being expressed. This confidentiality should be respected outside meetings by members of the Equality Forum.

A record of discussions and recommendations will be produced in the form of minutes but members of the Forum are responsible for ensuring that information is conveyed back to their networks/organisations and any necessary discussion takes place within their particular community of interest to allow them to accurately reflect the views of the community rather than just their own.

When the Forum is being consulted by statutory organisations the maximum possible time period should be given for responses, consistent with the Calderdale Compact, to allow members to seek the views of their organisations/networks.

9. Reporting arrangements

The Equality Forum will report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership. It will produce an annual report outlining key issues addressed each year.

10. Expenses

Reasonable expenses associated with attendance at the Equality Forum, such as childcare and travel, will be reimbursed.

11. Review of terms of reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually in conjunction with membership review.