



equality
action

Business Plan

2024/2027

Charity Number 1088411

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Executive Summary

Equality Action, established in 1969, is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, dedicated to empowering disadvantaged communities by promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion. This business plan outlines our strategy for the next three years, focusing on enhancing community cohesion, improving health and education outcomes, and ensuring access to rights and services for our beneficiaries, most of whom live in the Borough of Charnwood.

Our mission is to:

- Promote equality and diversity, dignity, and respect through inclusion.
- Be accountable while fostering good relationships among stakeholders, and creating a safe, trustworthy environment for our beneficiaries.

We value:

- A diverse and inclusive environment where every individual is respected.
- Accountability to our beneficiaries and stakeholders, ensuring transparency and integrity in all our actions, with passion and commitment in meeting the needs of the community
- Achieving more together through teamwork and maintaining honesty and respect in all interactions.

Our primary aim is to:

- promote good relations, eliminate discrimination, and campaign for equality. Specifically, we aim to improve community cohesion, better educational results, and health for families, and overall, empowering people that are of disadvantaged backgrounds.

To achieve these aims and objectives, Equality Action will organise community events, and one-to-one/group learning opportunities to improve their English language skills and provide support in other aspects, which will increase their chances of being employable. Furthermore, we will collaborate with other local organisations to meet community needs.

Equality Action is governed by a Board of Trustees with diverse skills in governance, finance, health, safety, and human resources. Our staff team of eleven members is dedicated to delivering high-quality services, supported by volunteers and strategic partnerships.

We have secured significant funding from various sources, including the National Lottery Community Fund and Charnwood Borough Council. Our current projects focus on empowering women from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, delivering health and well-being activities, providing support for referrals to the NHS talking therapies, and supporting individuals with advice work e.g. debt, benefits, cost-of-living crisis etc. We aim to diversify our income by increasing unrestricted funds through donors and fundraising efforts.

Over the next three years, we look to prioritise becoming more financially stable, and broaden our capacity and capability to deal with new challenges. We would like to build on our influence in the community by focusing on youth leadership, enhancing marketing, and effectively demonstrating our impact in the community.

1. About EQUALITY ACTION

A not-for-profit organisation working towards empowering disadvantaged communities.

1.2 Our Purpose

Equality Action was set up to help individuals and groups of people from all backgrounds who may be disadvantaged and facing barriers to access services and support. Our targeted services are developed to achieve community cohesion, integration, and working towards empowering disadvantaged communities.

1.3 Background

Equality Action is a registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee, established in 1969. Over the years, we have continuously evolved to meet local needs.

1.4 Mission statement:

Promote equality and diversity, dignity, and respect through inclusion.

1.5 Core Values

Equality, diversity, and inclusivity.

- Ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- Appreciating and respecting the unique differences among people.
- Believing that embracing a variety of perspectives and backgrounds enhances our creativity and effectiveness.
- Creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued.
- Striving to ensure all voices are heard
- Aiming to eliminate discrimination and promote fairness and justice in all our practices.

Good relations between stakeholders.

- We foster strong, cooperative relationships with all our stakeholders.
- We prioritise open and honest communication to ensure mutual understanding and trust.
- We actively involve our stakeholders in the decision-making process allowing us to create shared value and achieve common goals.

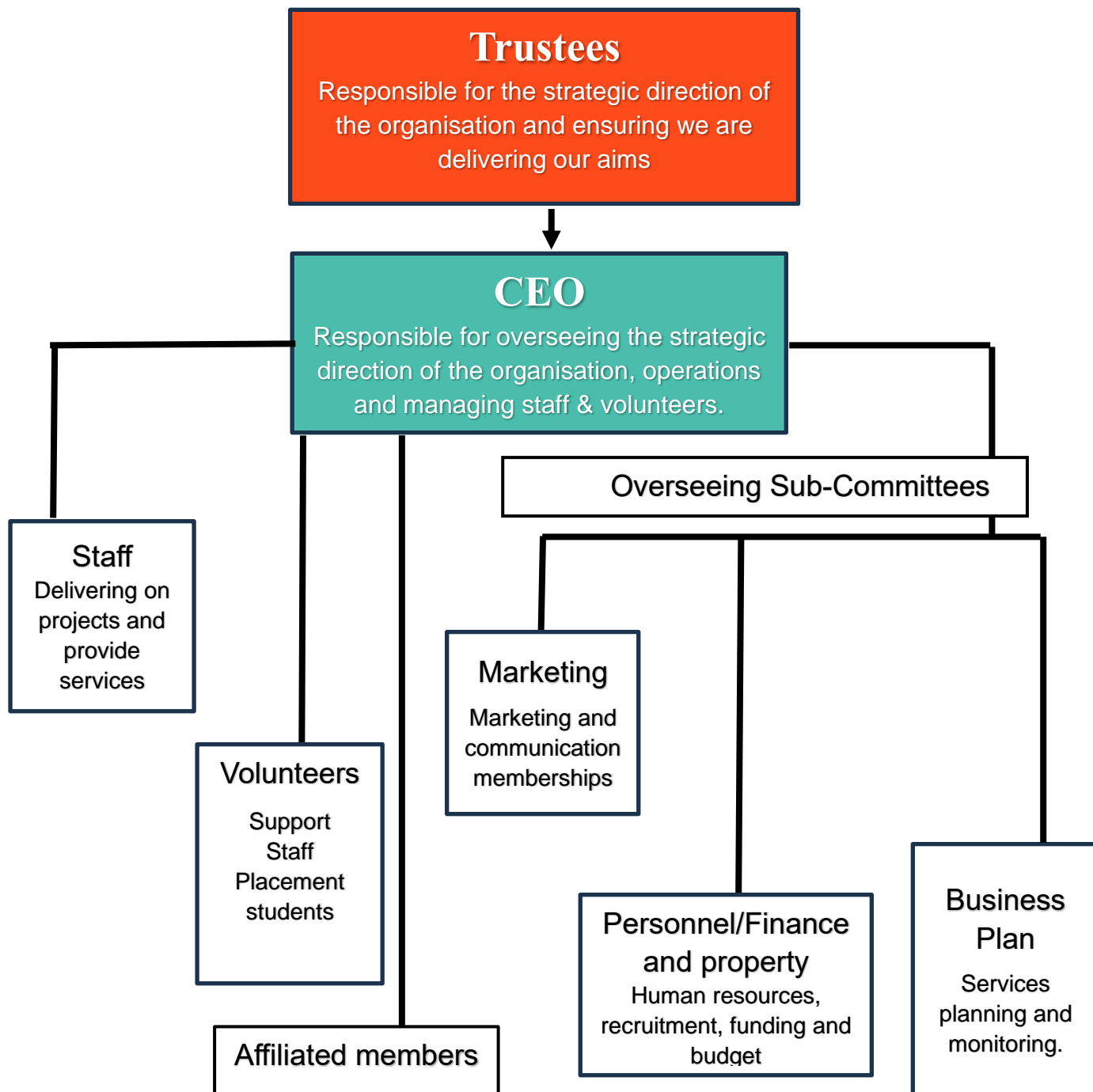
Being accountable

- We champion accountability to ensure that our working environment is safe, and the space for our clients is sound.
- We take ownership of our actions and maintain openness in our processes.
- We build trust by consistently delivering on our commitments and being answerable to our stakeholders.

Commitment.

- We are fully invested in our work, giving our best effort to achieve results.
- We remain steadfast and resilient, even when faced with challenges, to reach our goals.

1.6 Organisational Structure



2. Evidence of need

We use the population data provided on equality characteristics/groups by Charnwood Council in its Equality Strategy and use the link below:

https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/public_equality_data

2.1 Community cohesion/integration

We believe it is important to encourage all people in our town to come together as a community. We are a key partner in promoting community cohesion. From the outset, a major aim has been to promote good relations among all people locally in Loughborough/Charnwood and with the rise in hate crime and discrimination we are best placed locally to be bringing communities together.

2.2 Health inequalities

There is an ageing population in all communities as people live longer, but some have less access to pensions, health, and support services. The increasing health and care needs of our ageing clients present challenges to provide relevant and accessible services. Mental health and complex associated problems are a hidden but important issue.

2.3 Lack of IT, language, and other skills

Many of our clients face barriers in accessing services, such as language skills and lack of computer literacy, making them vulnerable and unable to access and understand crucial information and advice. Much of government information is 'digital by default'. This switch to Universal Credit for everyone has added to the barriers our clients face as it needs to be done using IT and digital skills.

2.4 Advice work & accessing services and support

Due to barriers mentioned above most of our clients are often unable to know what services are available to them and how to access them. We offer support and help, for example on how to report hate crime, access adult social care support, support their children's educational needs.

The recent pandemic and the aftermath issues facing people and the more recent cost of living crises has increased the need for our support. More people are facing debt and financial hardship, and this is also having a negative impact on their physical and mental health.

2.5 Raising awareness/working with young people.

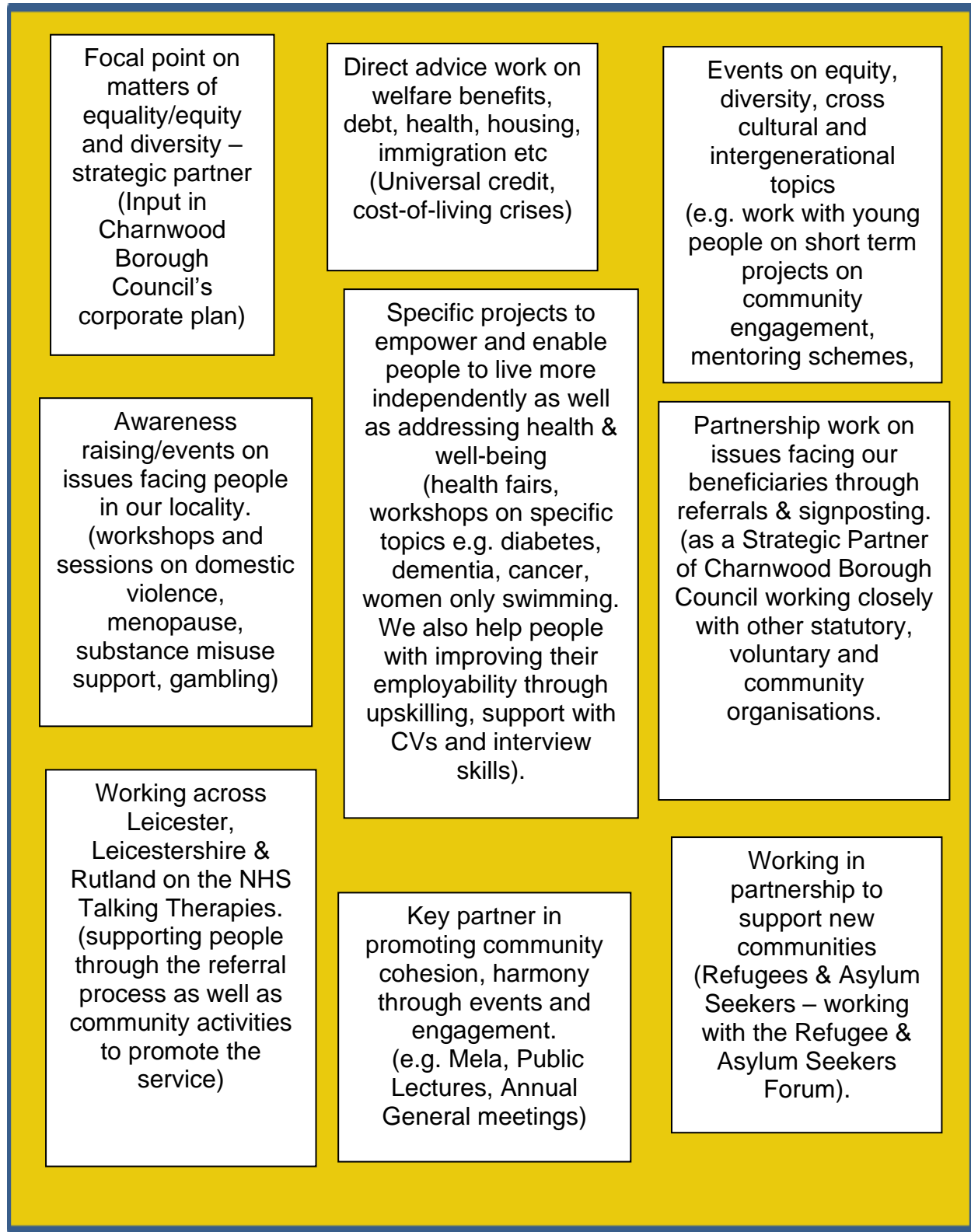
We help raise awareness of issues and topics that may be of concern nationally and locally to our beneficiaries through workshops, events, public lectures, and health fairs. We are working more with young people to engage in inter-generational work, including youth empowerment, leadership, mentoring and creating champions in the community.

2.6 Refugees/asylum seekers

We are a part of a local network that is supporting refugees and asylum seekers. This is a partnership forum made up of statutory, voluntary and community groups.

3. Our Projects and Services

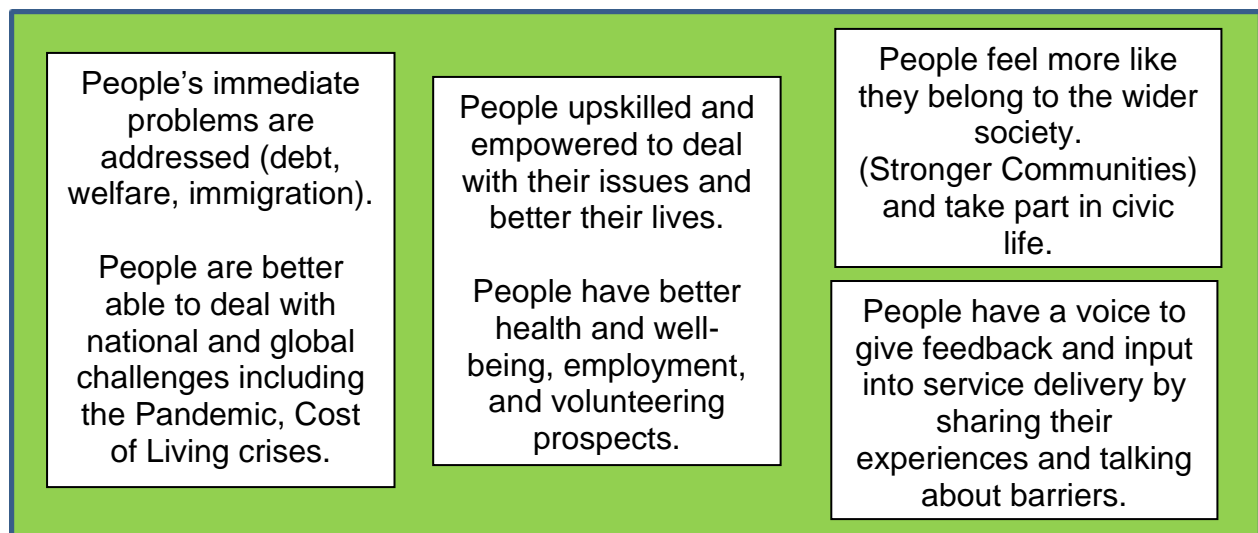
3.1 Current Work



4. Our Beneficiaries

- People from minority backgrounds, particularly South Asian community.
- Individuals in the Borough who are at risk of discrimination through any of the protected characteristics.
- Vulnerable people and those who lack understanding of how systems work for benefits, housing, education, social services, health services or employment.
- Local voluntary, community organisations and groups, especially those representing all the equality strands, including faith groups.
- Local statutory agencies e.g. Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire. County Council, Leicestershire Constabulary
- Local schools, colleges, and Loughborough University
- Deprived socio-economic groups.
- Victims of hate crime/incidents, their families and communities affected by hate incidents.
- Newly settled families from a variety of backgrounds (this includes those who have moved for economic reasons as well as refugees and asylum seekers).

4.1 Impact on beneficiaries



5. Partnerships

We are proud of our history of collaborating with key partners across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. We are often a part of consortium projects and have joint partnership funding for some of our projects.

We receive and make referrals for specialist support for our beneficiaries. Where possible we link into existing initiatives and complement the work our partners do.

6. Strategic review and Operational Plan

Based on our strategic review with external consultants, kindly funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation, we revised our future direction, objectives, aims, communications and funding strategies.

The strategic review highlighted the following six priorities:

- Understanding and communicating the organisation's purpose
- Working in wider communities
- Funding (income diversification)
- Data gathering and demonstrating impact
- Operational efficiency and effectiveness
- Marketing & communications
- Organisational capacity

A five-step approach was taken:

- **Objectives:** revisiting the strategic objectives of Equality Action by reviewing relevant documents/reports/papers
- **Deliverables:** identify key issues and any gaps to be addressed. These were aligned with Equality Action's vision, mission, and organisational culture.
- **Engagement:** engaging trustees and staff in one-to-one "listening" meetings to identify the issues most important to Equality Action's (forward strategy) strategic direction
- **Action:** summarising and presenting the findings of the listening meetings and seeking input from staff and trustees to agree the way forward.
- **Measurement:** performance measurements (through impact assessment on our work)

This was followed by further support from external consultants on:

6.1 Marketing & Communications - this has led to a review of all our communications, website, brand strengthening and showing the impact our work makes to our beneficiaries. We now have a dedicated Comms Officer who works 10 hours a week and is in the process of reviewing our website and strengthening all our communications. Our marketing is evolving and so is the way we communicate. We are on some social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and X. We also have a YouTube channel and are on LinkedIn.

We produce regular newsletters which go out widely to our members, partners, and beneficiaries. We send out press releases, use posters and social media to promote events. Word of mouth is another vital way that our services get promoted with service users telling friends and family. We have a Marketing, Publicity and PR subcommittee which oversees the promotion of our work. Many of our beneficiaries are not on social

media or have limited digital skills, we use other means of communication including word of mouth.

6.2 Funding/income diversification – currently we are heavily reliant on grants. We worked with a consultant to explore different income generation options, including trusts, donors, etc. to enhance our fundraising over the coming years.

6.3 Other - The other priorities listed relating to organisational capacity, operational efficiency, data gathering, and wider communities' have been addressed by our own internal reviews and recommendations from staff and trustees.

7. Governance & Management

7.1 Board of trustees

We have a Board of Trustees who govern the work of the organisation. The management and oversight of all our work/projects rests with the board of trustees and its sub committees. The trustees have skills and experience in governance, finance, health & safety, managing projects, human resources and mentoring and come from diverse backgrounds.

A skills audit is conducted at intervals for Trustees; training is provided as needs are identified; and an induction pack with procedures and policies is given to new Trustees.

We use the discipline of being a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and being regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

All our work is monitored and evaluated by the trustees and steering groups both for funders and for internal information. We monitor for impact and change and are accountable and transparent.

7.2 Staff team

We have a team of eleven staff. We are accredited to level 2 of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), ref. N200100221 for our immigration work.

We strive to provide:

- Respect for the person.
- Confidentiality in services provided to clients, individuals, or groups.
- Transparency in the operation of our business
- Accountability for monitoring change and the positive impact of our services
- Integrity in our relationships with funders
- Mutual responsibility between trustees
- Sharing of knowledge and experience amongst members, staff, and trustees
- Trust and co-operation with partners

8. Financial Plan

8.1 Current position

Charnwood Borough Council – strategic partner grant (this is a two-year service level agreement that is reviewed and renewed on an on-going basis).

National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) – we have had previous projects funded by the NLCF and have secured another 5-year project “EmpowHER” that collaborates with women from BAME backgrounds (2024-2028)

Vita Health Group – we are funded for a 5-year project “NHS Talking Therapies” which is currently in Year 4 (2021-2025).

Awards for All – Cost of Living programme funding over 2 years to deliver casework.

Previous funders have included: Leicestershire County Council; Lloyds Bank Foundation; Community Justice Foundation; Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board; Community Foundation – Getting Help in Neighbourhoods; The Rank Foundation, National Grid; Erasmus Plus; Skills Funding Agency; The Good Things Foundation; The Henry Smith Charity; Jean Cope Trust and Equality & Human Rights Commission (formerly Commission for Racial Equality).

8.2 Reserves

We have healthy reserves for the size of our charity in line with Charity Commission guidelines.

In conclusion, the board of trustees, CEO and staff of Equality Action look forward to successfully delivering our strategic priorities working in partnership with our funders, strategic partners and affiliated members.



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