



East Renfrewshire Equalities Forum Open Day Sat 2nd December 2023

Notes from group discussion

What's blooming in East Renfrewshire?

- Participatory Budgeting (PB) works well and some of the Community Councils are actively involved. It works well when the word gets out and people know about it. Getting the word out is the challenge. Incredible Edible, Neilston – community composting, people voted on who should get the funding. Participatory Budgeting gets people to team up and work together. It's a good way of letting people know what's going on in their communities. Promotes a shared purpose.

What are the new shoots/areas where things are happening that we need to grow and see more of?

Council sharing info

- What's On East Ren
- How can the council share what's going on a bit more? They need to share what's happening with smaller groups, even if those groups are less 'official', e.g. community groups. Talking Points in East Ren is good. A few participants said it's not always easy to contact them.
- A list of what's going on would be good, but there is so much happening it would be hard to read – format is key to it being accessible and inviting to read.
- A hub-type venue would be good.
- As a volunteer involved in running activities, you can feel like you're on your own, so you need to feel like you're a part of things, that there are others out there doing similar work who you can link in with.

Community Councils

- There should be an equality rep on each community council.
- CCs cannot rely on volunteers all the time. This can be a challenge as they are not paid to carry out their roles.
- Getting people to attend – choosing times – can also be a challenge; some people who are interested are left out if they can't make the set times.
- How do we get more people involved in community councils?

Who are the pollinators – who makes positive things happen?

- The Big Lunch: connecting people with food, gets people in the door and brings folk together, helps engage with people in the community.
- Community Repair Café
- Community Tool Shed
- Digital Buddies – previous OTB project buddying people with neighbours and school pupils to support them to use technology
- Silver Cloud Project – supporting older people to use tech in libraries

What are the thorns and slugs – the challenges?

- How to get information out there:
 - Languages: how do we communicate in all the community languages?
 - Literacy and digital literacy are both barriers to finding out what's on and knowing where to go to access services.
 - Some people aren't online and for some they don't want to access information that way, they prefer face to face, word of mouth, and/or printed resources.
- Community Council Directory is good but it's an online form which can make it a bit inaccessible for some people to use and not everybody submits their information. Keeping information up to date is also an issue – is the information still current and relevant?
- Go to groups and chat together is great – visiting takes time, you can't see everyone.
- There are lots of skills in the community – how do we make best use of them?

Ideas for the forum

- It should be issues-based, but equalities is such a broad issue with different groups facing a range of issues and that can be a challenge.
- How do we have a lived experience forum? Equalities workshops – support early participation for everyone to find out more about equalities and share knowledge.
- Education about equalities is needed. The Forum could share lived experiences and stories about what is going on in East Renfrewshire. Simple stories to inspire and educate.
- An Equalities Forum can encourage people to think about what will help groups in certain situations, e.g. HERBERT protocol for police to help people with dementia.
- Equalities Forum: is this the right name for the group? What should it be called?
- Should it be a broad or narrow focus? Must include lived experience and ensure that messages do not get lost, e.g. young people with autism transitioning from high school need more support – sharing this lived experience is so important if things are to change.
- How do we support people to tell their stories? It must be a safe space where people can share difficult experiences. How can the group be open to all and at the same time, be a safe space to share difficult experiences?

- It must be open to all.
- It must share good practice.
- Don't just focus on one area, or one thing, there are many different groups and different issues, although some issues are faced by many groups, e.g. transport is an issue for many people in East Ren, especially the most vulnerable.
- Empower/support/encourage people to speak up and get involved.
- How do we advertise it? On the side of council vehicles?
- How do we get people involved? Inspiration could help "facts tell, stories sell".
- It cannot be a tick-box exercise.
- HSCP – feed into this and receive feedback: people need to know that they are being listened to and what is done with their input, e.g. council paper committing to equalities, people need to see it.
- East Ren Council needs to show a clear commitment to the forum by putting resources behind it. In terms of council involvement in running the forum, it should be light touch so that the forum is led by the community.
- The leisure trust used to have an Equalities Forum – can we get equalities groups and forums to join up?

Ideas for the next meeting about the forum in January 2024

What should be on the agenda?

- Focus on what the benefits of the forum will be, but manage expectations of what the forum can do and achieve.
- The forum needs a mission statement and guiding principles, for example:
 - everyone in East Ren is important
 - equalities is for everyone
 - everyone must feel listened to
 - the forum must be non-judgmental and welcoming.
- We will also need to consider how to build in processes – how will it operate?
- Identify key themes.
- Consider easy ways to share information about the forum with communities:
 - Connecting people around East Ren is key
 - Being hooked into networks and what's going on
 - People feel they can come along to it, even if they don't have burning issues
 - How to encourage people along.
- Forum must be open but also have a structure of some kind
- It must be facilitated
- It must be allowed to evolve and be flexible
- It must be a safe, respectful space – how do we make that happen?
- It should share useful resources and toolkits
- We must share knowledge and experience from other equalities forums at the next meeting – how do they run and operate? What can we learn from them?