

Equality Impact Assessment

Houghton Regis Community Development Charity (HRCDC)

September 2024

1. Introduction

Houghton Regis Community Development Charity (HRCDC) aims to foster a healthy, vibrant, and inclusive community in the Bidwell West and HRN2 areas of Houghton Regis. The charity's core mission is rooted in Christian values, but it emphasises inclusivity and welcomes individuals of all faiths and none. This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) explores how the charity's activities and strategies impact different community groups, identifies potential areas for discrimination or inequality, and suggests measures to enhance inclusion and equality.

2. Purpose of the EIA

The purpose of this EIA is to:

- Assess the potential equality impacts of the charity's work.
- Ensure that HRCDC activities promote equality and inclusion in line with the UK Equality Act 2010.
- Identify potential risks or barriers for diverse community groups and offer solutions to mitigate them.

3. Charity Objectives

The HRCDC aims to:

- Develop a financially sustainable community centre that acts as a hub for residents.
- Build social equity and a sense of belonging.
- Establish a paid pioneer community worker role to engage with residents.
- Foster a worshipping Christian community within the new housing development.
- Promote inclusive community activities that welcome all, regardless of faith or background.

4. Impact on Protected Groups

The following assessment considers how HRCDC's activities affect groups protected under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

4.1 Age

Impact: HRCDC works across different age groups, offering community events for families, children's activities (e.g., craft and film clubs), and services at Thorn Springs Care Home for older adults. The charity's work ensures that the needs of both younger and older people are addressed.

Mitigation: Maintain inter-generational programming to foster relationships between different age groups and ensure activities cater to a broad age range.

4.2 Disability

Impact: The community centre, both temporary and permanent, must be fully accessible to those with physical or mental disabilities. Activities and services should also be designed to include those with varying abilities.

Mitigation: Ensure all buildings are fully accessible, with wheelchair access, accessible toilets, and support for individuals with learning difficulties. Provide alternative formats of communication for those with sensory impairments (e.g., sign language interpreters, braille, or large print).

4.3 Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact: HRCDC provides pastoral care for residents, including support around life milestones such as marriages. The charity should ensure that all relationships, including civil partnerships and same-sex marriages, are equally supported, and celebrated.

Mitigation: Ensure policies and practices are inclusive of all forms of partnership and marriage.

4.4 Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact: Events and facilities should cater to pregnant women and new mothers, offering spaces for nursing, baby-changing facilities, and parent-child programs.

Mitigation: Provide accessible, family-friendly facilities at the community centre. Ensure programming includes opportunities for maternal and child bonding, including parent-child activities and peer support groups for new parents.

4.5 Race

Impact: The charity is working to engage with residents from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, including early contact with local Muslim and Hindu communities.

Mitigation: Continue efforts to engage with diverse racial and ethnic groups. Offer multicultural activities and events to celebrate diverse cultures and traditions. Provide materials in multiple languages, when possible, to ensure accessibility for non-native English speakers.

4.6 Religion or Belief

Impact: Although the charity is founded on Christian values, it has adopted an inclusive, multi-faith approach. This has already included outreach to non-Christian faiths, such as the local Muslim and Hindu communities.

Mitigation: Ensure all activities and services are open to individuals of all faiths and none, reflecting the charity's "faith-based, not faith-biased" approach. Incorporate multi-faith dialogue and programming to foster inclusivity.

4.7 Sex

Impact: Activities should not be disproportionately aimed at one gender, ensuring that both men and women feel equally valued in the community.

Mitigation: Review programming to ensure gender balance and inclusivity. Offer activities that appeal to a range of interests and do not reinforce gender stereotypes.

4.8 Gender Reassignment

Impact: The charity's initiatives should be welcoming to individuals undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment, ensuring that they feel included and valued in all community activities.

Mitigation: Provide training for staff and volunteers to create a welcoming environment for transgender individuals. Avoid assumptions about gender and ensure facilities are inclusive, such as gender-neutral restrooms.

4.9 Sexual Orientation

Impact: The charity should ensure that people of all sexual orientations feel safe, welcome, and included in the community's activities.

Mitigation: Promote LGBTQ+ inclusivity through training for staff and volunteers, ensuring that the environment is welcoming to people of all sexual orientations. Publicise anti-discrimination policies to reassure LGBTQ+ residents and visitors.

5. Potential Risks

5.1 Faith-Bias Perception: While the charity is founded on Christian values, there is a risk that non-Christians or those of no faith may feel excluded if activities are perceived as too faith centric.

Solution: Emphasise the inclusive nature of the charity and continue to engage actively with other faith groups and secular organisations.

5.2 Accessibility of Services: Physical, sensory, or cognitive barriers may prevent some individuals from fully participating in community activities.

Solution: Ensure that all services, events, and facilities are designed to be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure continued equality and inclusion:

- Regularly assess the demographics of participants in community activities.
- Gather feedback from residents to ensure that all groups feel included, and their needs are met.
- Adjust programming based on community input, focusing on inclusivity and accessibility.

7. Conclusion

HRCDC's commitment to fostering an inclusive community is evident through its diverse programming and partnerships. By addressing potential risks and ensuring that the community centre and activities are accessible to all, the charity can continue to promote equality and support a thriving, diverse community. Regular evaluation and engagement with underrepresented groups will further ensure that HRCDC remains a welcoming and inclusive space for all residents.

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