

Empowerment through community action

The City of Edinburgh Council has funded the development of an equality and human rights network aiming to help grassroots groups and organisations to work in partnership with public services all as part of community planning to advance equality, promote human rights and tackle poverty and inequality in Edinburgh.

In collaboration with key partners including NHS Lothian, Police Scotland and the Fire and Rescue Service, the Council set up a grant application in March this year to develop and manage the new Equality and Rights Network (EaRN). The three year grant was awarded to long-standing charity Volunteer Centre Edinburgh (now Volunteer Edinburgh) in May.

EaRN will provide a platform for community and third sector groups to influence public policy and practice across the themes of poverty, inequality, human rights, caring and groups protected under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender re-assignment, , marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

“It is essential that those facing inequality and discrimination in their daily lives are consulted on public services and policies surrounding equality and human rights,” said David Griffiths, Chief Executive of disability charity ECAS and one of the key drivers in the development of EaRN. “Establishing this network will ensure that those who are most affected by such policies and practice have a say in their development.”

Central to the aims of EaRN will be to improve information sharing and promote collaboration between the many diverse

groups and organisations working at the forefront of equality and rights issues in Edinburgh. Through events, conferences and consultations Network Members will work together to identify key priorities, share best practice and improve services related to such issues as homelessness, employability and identity-based hate crime.

Over the coming months EaRN will be reaching out for Members through social media and public events. Members will have the opportunity to be engaged in and consulted on developments and reviews in services, policies and practices surrounding equality and rights. Membership is open to any group, partnership, forum, organisation, agency, company or individual interested in advancing equalities issues, tackling health inequalities, promoting rights-based work and combating poverty.

EaRN will also be recruiting volunteer Equalities Ambassadors who will act as an important link between public services and the most marginalised groups in society, ensuring that those who most need it have the opportunity for their voices to be heard.

“At its heart EaRN is about empowerment,” said Caroline Gibb, Development Worker for the network. “Our aim is that through providing a platform where people and organisations can come together and collaborate, individuals and communities affected by inequalities will feel confident to articulate the changes they want and need”.

To learn more about EaRN and how to become a Network Member or Equalities Ambassador, email equalityandrights@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk

Submitted by [Roseanna Macdonald](#)

