

**EQUALLY
OURS**

**A strong voice
for human rights
and justice**

Our annual review 21/22



'We believe that a good and strong society is a just and inclusive one. One where we are free from harm and can all contribute and flourish, whoever we are, whatever we believe in and whatever we do and don't have. A society that is equally ours.'

Welcome

A very warm welcome to our review of the year – my first year as proud Chair of Equally Ours.

It goes without saying that we are living in extraordinarily complex, challenging and divisive times. In this year alone, we faced the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, accelerating climate breakdown, the beginning of the worst cost of living crisis in 40 years, and increasing UK Government threats to the fundamental and essential rights we rely on every day.

These national and global events affect us all, but we know that they don't affect us all equally: some people and groups experience considerable additional hardship, prejudice and injustice because inequality is woven into the very fabric of our society.

Equality and human rights are tools we can all use to address these harms and inequalities and create greater social justice.

This is why Equally Ours' unique role has never been so important. With our members and wider civil society, we work together to advance solutions for our common good so we can all live free from harm and can contribute and flourish. We have called this Annual review, 'A strong voice for human rights and justice'. This is one of the ways our stakeholders have described us, along with 'brave', 'strategic', 'creative' and 'innovative' – approaches we live by and are proud of.

As we approach our 20th anniversary in 2022, when we will reflect on and celebrate our collective effort and achievements, our focus is firmly on the future. During the year, we commissioned the Sheila McKechnie Foundation to work with us on developing our exciting new ten-year strategy. By taking this longer-term view, we plan to raise our sights above the maelstrom of day-to-day politics and policy change and set out a bold new agenda for social justice over the next ten years.

Above all, we have hope. Hope that, together, we will create and nurture a kinder, more compassionate and more equal UK.

I hope you enjoy reading about the difference we made this year.



Jess McQuail
Chair
Equally Ours

About us

What we do

Equally Ours brings together people and organisations working across equality, human rights and social justice to make a reality of these in everyone's lives.

Starting out in 2002, we grew into an influential network that successfully made the case for improving protections for everyone, resulting in the Equality Act 2010 – the biggest single shake-up of the UK's equality laws.

We are the only UK-wide pan-equality and human rights network in the UK. We use this unique position and the strength of our shared voice and evidence base to protect and advance equality and human rights in law and practice.

Our three strategic goals are:

1. Increase public and political support for equality and human rights
2. Create solutions to advance an equal and diverse society
3. Strengthen the capacity of civil society to progress these goals.

How we do it

Robust evidence, achievable policy solutions and more compassionate public attitudes are inextricably linked in achieving social change. Through our members and networks, we join up research, policy, and communications to shift public opinion and policy in positive and powerful ways.

We've been instrumental in changing the terms of the equality and human rights debate, using constructive dialogue, collaboration, and challenge to improve national policy and help people use their rights in practical ways.

We were one of the first adopters of strategic communications (evidence- and value-based framing) in the UK, establishing a ground-breaking initiative to help people see the relevance of human rights in their everyday lives.

And we have equipped and supported hundreds of organisations, funders, and community groups to advocate and take action for social justice on the ground.

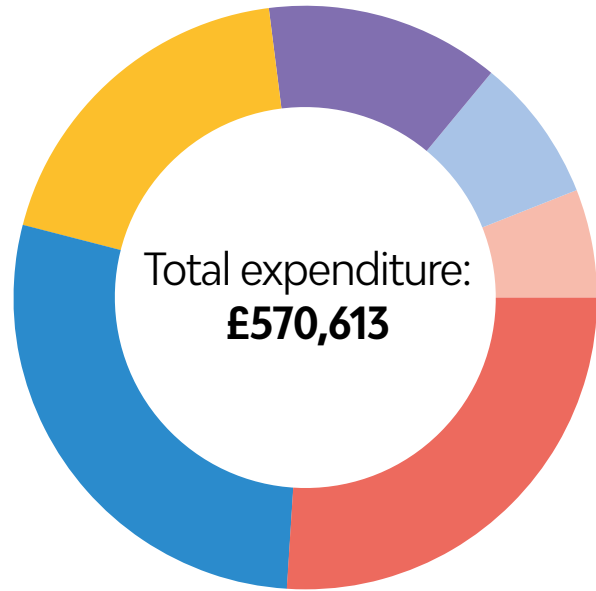
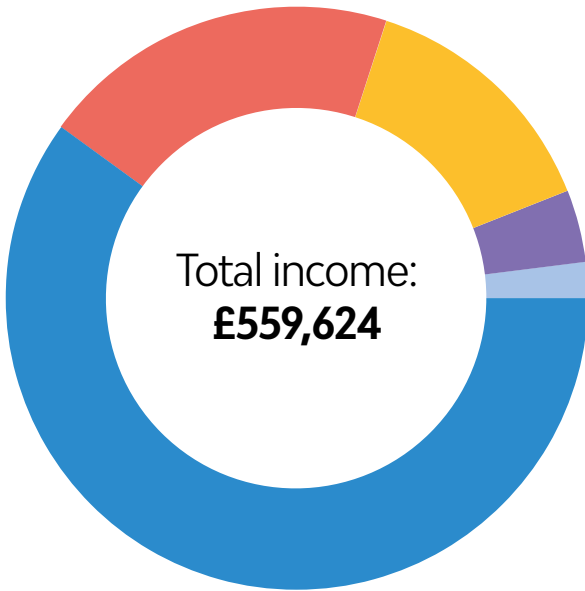
Everything we do is about using our energy, expertise, and influence to create a just and inclusive society.

Our ten highlights of the year

We are proud of everything we achieved over the year. Here are just ten highlights.

- 1 We stood up for people's rights and worked hard to protect the laws we rely on and make use of by convening and directly supporting 50 organisations to respond to the reviews of the Human Right Act and Judicial Review.
- 2 Our expert four-year convening and advocacy on hate crime laws contributed to the Law Commission's final report on its review of hate crime legislation. This included key measures that will ensure equal treatment for different groups.
- 3 We sought to ensure the UK Government's response to emergencies meets the needs and rights of us all, through engagement with the Cabinet Office and detailed submissions to both the consultation on a National Resilience Strategy and the draft terms of reference for the independent UK Covid-19 Inquiry.
- 4 We made sure that equality and human rights are better embedded at all levels of civil society emergency planning and response, through chairing the Equality Steering Group of the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership and serving on its national programme board.
- 5 We launched Levelling up: Firm foundations, setting an agenda for levelling up to advance people's equality and human rights. Our work contributed to a crucial shift in key policy-influencers' approach.
- 6 As an active member of the Civil Society Group, we ensured that equality and human rights were included in sector-wide priorities. This included championing the findings from our Levelling up report with UK Government ministers.
- 7 We expanded our policy network membership to include more grassroots organisations, providing them with increased access to policy influence, and helping broaden our network's grassroots evidence-base.
- 8 We enabled 40 trusts and foundations to come together to catalyse change and improve investment in racial justice in the UK, by providing the Secretariat and thought leadership for the Funders for Race Equality Alliance.
- 9 We supported 47 organisations working on race, disability, women's, and LGBT+ equality, and pan-equality issues to develop trading activities, drive income diversification and build financial resilience, through our Equality Sector Enterprise Development Programme.
- 10 The new evidence-based narrative to build support for a better vision of social care that we developed with the Social Care Future network was adopted and adapted by political parties and public and voluntary sector organisations in the UK and influenced campaigners across the Europe and in the USA.

Income and expenditure



Where our money came from

- Restricted grants..... 60%
- Unrestricted grants/donations..... 20%
- Training and consultancy: 14%
- Memberships..... 4%
- Covid furlough scheme 2%

How we spent our money

- Strategic communications..... 28%
- Policy, research and member engagement 26%
- Equality Sector Enterprise Development Programme 19%
- Funders for Race Equality Alliance 13%
- Admin and governance..... 8%
- Running costs 6%
(rent, IT, bills, training, insurance, etc)

Goal 1: Increase public and political support for equality and human rights

‘The #socialcarefuture public audience research provides the evidence to demonstrate just how much difference the words we choose can make, and the guide for communicating about social care offers us a new narrative to help transform social care.’

Bryony Shannon, Strategic Lead for Practice Development at Doncaster Council, and Social Care Future member.

How we talk about – ‘frame’ – social issues matters because it affects how we think and feel about them. And that matters because public opinion influences and justifies the policy choices and decisions that make a material difference to our lives.

It’s a time of increasing narrative flux and divisiveness. Working with partners across the sector, this year we continued to pioneer the use of evidence-based strategic communications to develop new narratives that will lead to better solutions to our shared social problems. We expanded and deepened our expertise on how best to understand and shift what people really think and feel, honing our own narrative change model.

Key narrative change consultancy projects during the year included ageing and demographic change, social care, young people’s mental health, trans rights, and disability rights.

Reframing ageing: Centre for Ageing Better

We completed this significant project in partnership with research consultancy, Savanta ComRes. The [final report](#) provided in-depth evidence of current attitudes, and what new frames and messages work best to make people more positive about the process and experience of ageing, and expand their understanding of the structural nature of this experience. The Centre for Ageing Better published and widely publicised a [guide](#) to talking about ageing and older age incorporating our evidence-based recommendations.

Building public support to transform social care: Social Care Future

We worked with the Social Care Future network to co-produce a [practical guide](#) to building public support for a better vision of social care, based on our extensive attitudinal and framing [research](#) in the previous year. The new narrative has been adopted and adapted by, among others, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adult Social Care, the Labour Party,

Alzheimer's Society, various local authorities across England, and the Government in the White Paper on adult social care. The insights have also been used by campaigners across Europe and in the USA.

Framing the movement for young people's mental health: YoungMinds

We wrapped up our research and messaging project with YoungMinds, producing a practical, evidence-based guide to help them communicate effectively about young people's mental health, and delivering a talk to their wider department and senior staff to help them understand and use the research.

Reframing trans rights in Scotland: Scottish Trans

We were commissioned by Scottish Trans, Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Youth Scotland for a year-long research and messaging project to find effective ways to talk about trans issues to the Scottish public. This project will complete in 2022.

Reframing disability rights: Inclusion London

We were partners in a coalition with Deaf and Disabled people's organisations, led by Inclusion London and Inclusion Barnet, that successfully obtained development funding for an exploratory phase of reframing work. We looked at the potential for reframing public attitudes towards disability, disabled people and the organisations run by and for them. As a result of this work, the partnership secured second-stage funding for a robust two-year reframing research project.



Goal 2: Create solutions to advance an equal and diverse society

‘Bringing together a wide range of organisations with diverse interests and uniting them in a common defence of equality and human rights is a huge achievement.’

Equally Ours member

‘Equally Ours ensures that devolved voices are heard – that doesn’t happen elsewhere.’

Equally Ours stakeholder

With our policy network members, Research Network, and the wider sector, we shape policy and practice to protect and advance equality and human rights. This is directly informed by people who are disadvantaged and discriminated against.

We always focus on seeking solutions to the social problems we face, through expert analysis, and constructive dialogue and challenge. And because *how* you say it is as important as *what* you say in making people listen and act, we use our evidence-based strategic communications expertise to frame our policy responses.

Our unique strength comes from our representation across all equality strands and human rights. We welcomed 11 new organisations this year, bringing the total number of [members](#) to 89. This included more grassroots organisations, providing them with increased access to policy influence, and helping broaden our network’s evidence-base. During the year, we updated our accessibility practice to make sure we are truly inclusive of D/deaf and disabled people and their organisations.

Key priorities this year included Covid-19 and future emergencies, protecting our threatened legal rights, engaging with the Government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda, and hate crime. We also played a significant role in wider civil society collaboration, ensuring equality and human rights are at the heart of priority areas of policy and advocacy work.

Ensuring a compassionate response to emergencies

As a network, we focused on making sure the UK Government’s approach to Covid-19 and future emergencies is compassionate and meets the needs and rights of us all.

This included continuing to work with the Cabinet Office, NHS Test and Trace and the Department of Health, and producing detailed submissions to consultations on both a

National Resilience Strategy and on the draft terms of reference for the independent UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Equally Ours chaired the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership's monthly Equality Steering Group throughout the year. We became a formal member of the Partnership and joined the national programme board to ensure that equality and human rights are embedded at a strategic level of civil society emergency planning and response.

Protecting our legal rights

The landscape around constitutional reform changed considerably during the year. Our work on rights showed Government, Parliament, and other policy makers how complex technical and legal changes impact on and matter to us all.

We focused on two areas: the threat to the rule of law arising from the Judicial Review and Courts Bill, and proposals to amend the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 and then replace it with a 'British Bill of Rights', which would limit people's ability to enforce their legal rights and hold public authorities to account.

We convened and directly supported 50 organisations to respond to the reviews of these vital pieces of legislation. And indirectly supported many more organisations and individuals to engage with them through our close collaboration with Liberty and the Public Law Project.

Judicial Review

Collectively, we coordinated our lobbying, developed shared messages, met with then Shadow Justice Secretary, David Lammy MP, and briefed MPs and peers of all parties for the Bill's second reading debate, and the Committee and Report stages.

The Lords' amendments overturned one of the UK Government's most harmful proposals, and the Government subsequently conceded and removed its proposal that judges couldn't address any impact that happened before the case was brought – a significant achievement for all those involved.

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA)

An Independent Review of the HRA was followed by the UK Government's own consultation on it and proposal to replace it with a British Bill of Rights. This galvanised our own and the wider human rights sector's already extensive and intensive work in this area.

Equally Ours participated in UK and devolved nation roundtables for the review and a Ministry of Justice roundtable for the consultation. We made submissions to the Review and the consultation and supported our members to do the same through a messaging guide and targeted 'policy tips' paper. We also provided members with expert advice on the Review Panel and Government consultation reports and led a workshop at the Law Centres Network annual conference, engaging them in strategies for protecting the HRA.

Collaborating

We participated in both the Civil Society Group's (CSG) Strategic Objectives Group and Strategic Oversight Group. Launched in November, the CSG aims to increase collaboration between infrastructure charities and across wider civil society.

And we helped set up the new UK-wide Civil Society Alliance, which will bring together a diverse range of organisations from the four UK administrations, focused on the protection of legislative rights.

‘Levelling up’

To truly level up the UK, the UK Government needs to put equality at the heart of both the design and outcomes of its Levelling Up work.

We published and launched [Levelling up: Firm foundations](#), setting an agenda for levelling up that would advance people’s equality and human rights. We were delighted that Caroline Noakes MP, Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, and Anneliese Dodds MP, Labour Party Chair and Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, both spoke at the launch.

We met with Kemi Badenoch, then Minister for Levelling Up and Women and Equalities, and Baroness Barran, to discuss how the Government could act on the findings of the report. While the subsequent White Paper focused primarily on inequalities between places, we achieved a shift in key policy-influencers’ approach to look also at inequality among people.

We continued our work to influence the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – a central part of the Government’s Levelling Up agenda – building relationships with new UK Government officials and contributing our analysis on the opportunities to harness investment to tackle labour market discrimination and inequalities.

Tackling hate crime

Our hate crime programme combines knowledge exchange with policy advocacy, and we facilitate the only national cross-equality group that brings together frontline and member-led and/or policy-focused organisations working in this area.

Our expert convening and advocacy on hate crime laws over the past four years contributed to the Law Commission’s final report on its review of hate crime legislation recommending achieving greater parity and clarity in the law by reforming the legislation into a single law. In line with our recommendations, this includes ensuring that disabled and LGBT+ victims of hate crime receive the same protection as victims with other protected characteristics and is a significant achievement.

‘The hate crime strategic group has been key to coordinating our campaign for legislative change.’

Hate crime strategy group member

During the year, we also engaged with Stella Creasey MP on her campaign to make misogyny a hate crime, and the (London) Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime appointed Equally Ours as the coordinator of its Hate Crime Stakeholder Reference Group that will help make sure statutory partners respond effectively to hate crime.

Researching the future of legal gender

As partners in the King’s College London five-year research project on the future of legal gender, we worked with them to deliver a final seminar for our policy and research networks. We created a positive and accessible space for dialogue on the research findings prior to the report’s finalisation and publication.

Goal 3: Strengthen the capacity of civil society

We face considerable and complex societal challenges, which can only be solved collectively. We learn from one another, and there is great power and resilience in combining our strengths, expertise, and efforts.

During the year, we continued to support civil society to protect and advance equality, human rights and social justice. We did this in four main ways: providing relevant, up-to-date, and accessible information; training communicators and campaigners to frame their campaigns and advocacy effectively; supporting equality organisations to develop trading activities, drive income diversification and build financial resilience; and enabling funders to improve investment in racial justice.

Informing

We actively informed thousands of people of the latest developments across human rights and equality law, policy and practice. Our website and social channels were viewed more than 200,000 times between them. And our newsletter – one of the highest drivers of traffic to our website – had 5,000 highly engaged subscribers.

Communicating for change

We continued to see a growing demand for our highly respected strategic communications training. Through a mix of funded training and consultancy work, we equipped 150 practitioners with the know-how and enthusiasm to talk about their issues in a way that will bring about progressive social change.

Our tailored training workshops received overwhelmingly positive feedback. For example, 100% participants on our flagship Communications for Change training for London-focused organisations working on poverty and inequality said they would recommend the training to others. Many of the participants also said that they were planning how to change their communications approach on the back of the training.

We successfully secured funding for a further three-year grant, which will be deeper in scope, focusing on more sustained learning for a smaller number of organisations.

Equally Ours was once again a partner for the Media Trust Stronger Voices programme. Our workshop was the highest rated out of all the training offered through the programme, with 100% rating both the quality of training delivery and the facilitator's subject knowledge as 'very good'. We also delivered a workshop for Media Trust's Headlining Mental Health programme for mental health charities.

Commissioned training consultancy work during the year included:

- ▶ training Shelter's communications and advice teams and working with them to develop effective messaging on DSS discrimination. The key resource is now being used [on their website](#) to help rental tenants challenge DSS discrimination

- ▶ developing and delivering a tailored workshop to Clive Lewis MP and his office to help them better communicate to win hearts and minds on their issues
- ▶ giving staff at the Paul Hamlyn Foundation a broad grounding in strategic communications theory and practice relevant to their work.

Increasing social investment in advancing equality

Our Equality Sector Enterprise Development Programme (ESEDP), in partnership with Access – the Foundation for Social Investment, which seeks to increase social investment in advancing equality, continued to go from strength to strength.

During the year, we: supported 47 organisations working on race, disability, women’s, and LGBT+ equality, and pan-equality, issues to develop trading activities, drive income diversification and build financial resilience; led on the development and delivery of two cross-sector peer learning conferences for the wider programme, and on its learning and commitment to EDI; and worked with the Diversity Forum, Good Finance and Big Society Capital to create greater synergies between the social investment space and the equality sector.

‘Equally Ours and the community making up the programme have felt like peers for life, and the impact, both social and financial on our organisation has been amazing,’

Founder and CEO of participating ESEDP organisation

Feedback from the programme was incredibly positive, with 91% of participants reporting that they feel it has helped them further grow their confidence and skills around enterprise development, and 81% noting an increase in

generated income – an impressive statistic given the current economic environment.

Catalysing change for racial justice

By providing the Secretariat and thought leadership for the Funders for Race Equality Alliance (the ‘Alliance’) – a group of 40 trusts and foundations working together to achieve racial equality in the UK – Equally Ours helped shape and deliver its ambitious strategy.

‘Being part of the Alliance has challenged us in ways that we were not prepared for, but it was the push that we needed to start making real change.’

Alliance member

During the year, the Alliance:

- ▶ audited over £271 million-worth of grants, with the aim of tracking and improving investment in racial justice
- ▶ published its first report, [A quantitative analysis of the emergency funding allocated to the UK Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary sector during Covid-19](#), in collaboration with Future Foundations UK and the Ubele Initiative
- ▶ commissioned a mapping of the race equality sector in England, and produced a directory of race equality organisations. Two funders used the mapping data to create a racial justice fund, which will be released in 2022
- ▶ ran a workshop series with 15 funding organisations and Migration Exchange, exploring the intersection between racial and migration justice. Feedback was very positive, including appreciation of the unique space the Alliance provides.

Our future plans

Over the next year, we will develop an ambitious ten-year strategy, setting out a bold agenda for social justice. It will focus on how, together, we can advance people's equality and human rights by influencing national policy on the big, long-term, structural issues of the law, climate, and investment.

In the shorter term, our priorities for 2022/23 are:

1. launching the new strategy, and reflecting back on everything we've achieved by celebrating our twentieth anniversary
2. continuing to protect and advance our hard-won rights, by making sure that the views of the wide range of people and communities that we and our members are part of and represent are put forward as the UK Government continues with its plans to replace the Human Rights Act
3. publishing innovative participative research into community priorities. This will provide a blueprint for a people's equality strategy, and help focus our public policy advocacy in a complex socio-economic context, and as we head towards a general election in 2023 or 2024
4. delivering exciting new strategic communications initiatives including reframing disability through co-production with a partnership of Deaf and Disabled People's organisations led by Inclusion London and Inclusion Barnet.
5. increasing racial justice, through our work providing the Secretariat to the Funders for Race Equality Alliance, including launching a new three-year strategy, and through our internal anti-racism programme
6. developing the next phase of the Equality Sector Enterprise Development Programme, and conducting new research into barriers to social investment for equality organisations
7. reviewing and taking steps to improve our own financial sustainability.

**We would like to thank all our funders
for their commitment and support:**

AB Charitable Trust, Access – the Foundation for Social Investment, Barrow Cadbury Trust, City Bridge Trust (via projects with Media Trust and Inclusion London), Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Funders for Race Equality Alliance (via Barrow Cadbury Trust), John Ellerman Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, The Legal Education Foundation, The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, National Lottery Community Fund, Trust for London, and all those who commissioned our consultancy services during the year.

And to thank Age UK and Herbert Smith Freehills for their generous pro-bono support.

We were also delighted to be a partner and beneficiary of the Advent of Change initiative for the third year running.

Finally, a heart-felt thank you to all the Trustees and staff of Equally Ours for their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work throughout the year.

**EQUALLY
OURS**

If you'd like to find out more about our work
and how you can get involved, get in touch
at info@equallyours.org.uk

Equally Ours is a registered charity (no. 1135357)
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