

Draft Terms of Reference for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Voluntary Sector Forum

Purpose

To bring together voluntary and community sector organisations in Newcastle-under-Lyme, in order to give them a stronger voice in influencing and contributing to decision-making and strategic planning in the Borough.

Aims

By creating a single platform for voluntary and community groups, the Forum will help to:

- Build the capacity of these organisations, to enable them to meet their own objectives and those of the sector as a whole.
- Organise and increase collective, credible and effective participation by the sector in local joint working, particularly by playing an active role in Locality Area Partnerships.
- Inform and influence those agencies responsible for commissioning services from voluntary and community groups, by harnessing the collective knowledge of those groups and promoting their unique potential contribution.
- Improve the engagement of voluntary organisations with the community, to ensure that services meet the needs of local people.
- Encourage high standards of conduct and practice within the voluntary and community sector.

Principles

In working to achieve these aims, the Forum will uphold the following principles:

- The Forum is a voluntary association of organisations, whose independence is acknowledged. The Forum will therefore seek to reflect the diversity of the voluntary sector in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Membership of the Forum will be on the basis of equal rights and responsibilities, mutual respect, and the recognition of difference as well as similarity of purpose.
- The Forum is committed to equality of opportunity for all people regardless of ethnicity, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation or religion.
- All members of the Forum will be accountable for their own actions, and will share the need for integrity, objectivity, openness, honesty and leadership.