

Terms of Reference for the Equal Access Advisory Group of Congleton Town Council

1. Purpose

The Equal Access Advisory Group is established to advise Congleton Town Council on enhancing accessibility and inclusivity within the town. The group aims to identify and address barriers faced by individuals with disabilities, ensuring Congleton becomes a more welcoming and accommodating community for all residents and visitors.

2. Objectives

- **Assessment and Recommendations:** Evaluate the current state of accessibility in Congleton and provide actionable recommendations to the Town Council for improvements.
- **Community Engagement:** Serve as a liaison between the Town Council and the community, gathering input from individuals with disabilities and related organisations to inform decision-making.
- **Awareness and Education:** Promote disability awareness and advocate for inclusive practices within the town, including organising educational initiatives and resources.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly review the progress of implemented accessibility measures and suggest further enhancements as needed.
- **Systemic Advocacy:** Advocate for systemic changes that benefit people with all disabilities, ensuring equality, dignity, and participation for everyone.

3. Group Aims

- Improve accessibility and inclusion by identifying barriers and developing constructive, community-wide solutions.
- Create an open, respectful environment where advocates and organisations can collaborate effectively.
- Focus on collective challenges and opportunities for broad improvements rather than individual complaints or grievances.

4. Membership

The Advisory Group comprises local residents with diverse disabilities, ensuring a broad representation of experiences and perspectives. While members bring lived experiences, discussions will encompass the needs of all disabilities. Where conflicting needs arise, members will work collaboratively to prioritise accessibility actions.

5. Meetings

Frequency: Meetings are held every 6-8 weeks in the Town Hall, with remote access available as needed.

Structure and Participation: The chair will ensure meetings remain structured and focused, moving discussions forward to cover all agenda items.

- Members should aim to attend regularly. If unable to attend, apologies should be sent in advance.
- Contributions should be concise to allow all voices to be heard.
- Constructive and respectful dialogue is essential. Expressions of frustration are valid but must remain solution-focused.
- To ensure that meetings run smoothly and effectively, we ask that any suggestions, including items for Any Other Business (AOB) and membership suggestions, be submitted in advance, to the chair and secretary for consideration before being brought to the group.

Minutes: Meeting minutes will be documented and made publicly available to maintain transparency and inform the community of ongoing efforts.

6. Guidelines for Collaboration

- **Positive, Solution-Focused Approach:** The group works together to identify challenges and propose solutions that improve the lives of disabled people.
- **Inclusivity and Respect:** All disabilities, challenges, and lived experiences are valued equally. Members must consider every disability, not just their own.
- **Teamwork and Respectful Communication:** Members should engage constructively, offering ideas and feedback that align with the group's mission.

- **Membership Commitment:** Members who have not attended for 12 months will be removed and contact details added to the interest group but are welcome to reapply in the future.

7. Reporting

The Advisory Group reports to the Community Committee of Congleton Town Council, providing updates, findings, and recommendations for consideration and action.

8. Scope of Work

While the Advisory Group focuses on areas within the Town Council's jurisdiction, it also identifies and highlights issues that fall under the remit of other organisations or authorities, advocating for necessary changes to improve accessibility throughout Congleton.

9. Inclusivity Statement

The group is committed to the principles of the social model of disability, which focuses on removing societal barriers to inclusion and participation. By working together, the group aims to foster a more accessible and equitable environment for all. If you require additional support, please contact us in advance so we can explore potential solutions. While we will always make every effort to accommodate reasonable adjustments, as a group made up primarily of volunteers, our capacity may be limited by available resources.

10. Review

These Terms of Reference are subject to periodic review to ensure they remain relevant and effective in guiding the Advisory Group's work in promoting equal access within Congleton.