

REPORT TO GYPSY/TRAVELLER SUB COMMITTEE – 30 JUNE 2021

DRAFT EQUALITY OUTCOMES 2021-2025

1 Reason for Report

- 1.1 Committee is recommended to consider the progress made in developing draft equality outcomes for 2021-2025.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the draft Equality Outcomes for the next four years.**

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector general equality duty that requires public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. These requirements apply across the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, and (to a limited extent) marriage and civil partnership. Definitions of each of the protected characteristics can be found on the Equality and Human Rights website.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government introduced specific duties for Scottish public authorities, to enable better performance of the public sector equality duty. One of these specific duties requires the Council to publish a set of Equality Outcomes by 30 April every four years and publish progress towards the outcomes every two years.
- 3.3 This report presents the Council's third set of Equality Outcomes, which build on the existing set and establish some new priorities. These outcomes are not meant to encompass all the work the Council does to reduce social inequality in Aberdeenshire. Instead, they reflect what are considered to be the priorities.

4 Discussion

4.1 Impact of Covid-19 on Equality

- 4.1.1 It is widely acknowledged that the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic are significant and unequal. This is both from the effects of contracting COVID-19 and the restrictions and lockdown measures required to control the spread of the virus. The impacts of COVID-19 have compounded existing inequalities with many protected groups experiencing increased risk from health impacts, mental health and economic disadvantage. Some examples from the Scottish Governments research into COVID-19 impact on equalities has identified that

‘disabled people were significantly more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation before the pandemic, and many disabled people have been worried about becoming acutely isolated at this time’ and ‘there have been reports of an increase in hate crime in the UK against people perceived to be of Chinese, South Asian or East Asian ethnicities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic’. Each of these factors can be further heightened by intersectionality of protected characteristics or socio-economic disadvantage. Further information on the impacts that have been identified, so far, of COVID-19 on equality can be found on the Scottish Government website.

4.1.2 Tackling these issues will be challenging but there is an opportunity as part of recovery and renewal to tackle many inequalities and by including them in our Equality Outcomes it will ensure that equalities are at the forefront of any goals. Equality and poverty will be considered as part of Aberdeenshire’s recovery plan and specific actions identified to measure the new equality outcomes for 2021 to 2025.

4.2 Draft Equality Outcome Development Process

4.2.1 Outcomes are the changes or effects that result from an action the Council has taken. Specifically, an Equality Outcome should achieve one or more of the following: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, or foster good relations. Equality Outcomes must be evidence-based and authorities should take reasonable steps to involve people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who represent the interests of those people.

4.3 Developing Draft Outcomes

The following stages outline the approach taken to develop the draft Equality Outcomes:

Evidence Review	Collecting research and data to form a database of evidence to establish our baseline of facts, figures and key issues.
Equality Community Survey	An online survey was published in February 2021.
Equalities Citizen’s Panel Survey	A series of questions was published in the March 2021 Citizen’s Panel which was distributed to 1,100 panel members. The panel is broadly representative of Aberdeenshire population. Around 300 responses were received.
Community Conversations	Fifteen community conversations have been hosted through existing networks or online through Microsoft Teams during March and April. These conversations have involved people representing the majority of the nine protected characteristics and aimed to understand individuals’ lived experience.
Consultation with British Sign Language users	A small number of conversations took place with BSL users within Aberdeenshire. These were facilitated locally by a colleague who uses BSL.

Aberdeenshire Voices on the Pandemic	A report from CLD which captures feedback from less heard voices outlining their experiences of Covid.
EHRC Event	Participation in the Equality and Human Rights event for Local Authorities. This event focused on aiding Local Authorities to identify and tackle the most significant and persistent inequalities.
Education	
During the pandemic ECS are prioritising frontline support for schools which has had an impact on consultation activities	
Pupils	Local Voices groups, Pupil Participation Forum, Youth Forums (x2)
Parents	Local Voices groups, Lived Experience Forum (Tackling Poverty & Inequalities)

4.3.1 There were consistent themes that emerged through the research and consultation. These were:

- in general, the themes of the existing outcomes continue to be a priority but some adjustments are required to make them more specific to particular groups and to incorporate recommended targeted actions to improve the effectiveness of our work
- improve the measurement of outcomes so that we are more able to demonstrate the impact of the work instead of volume
- involvement of groups in service design from the earliest stage
- commit to the principles of [Inclusive Communication](#)
- improved communication both internally and with partners about the work being done, sharing best practice and learning
- partnership working and utilising specialist knowledge of equality organisations

4.3.2 The above presents only a brief summary of the feedback generated through the outcome development process. The Council's Engagement and Equalities team is able to provide more detailed feedback from the various stages of engagement activity.

4.4 Draft Equality Outcomes

4.4.1 The proposed outcomes are a mixture of a revised outcomes from [the set for 2017 to 2021](#) and a number of new actions that have been identified through research and stakeholder engagement.

4.4.2 Based on the feedback we received from stakeholders, we have also made some more general changes to the set of outcomes including:

- We have separated the outcomes for the Council as an Employer and for the Education Authority, although there is crossover and areas of joint working between the outcomes this ensured clarity over the key target audience

- The previous outcome on training will not be carried forward in the same way. Although, based on the engagement and research, staff training and awareness continues to be a priority, the feedback also suggested tailored training may have more impact, therefore training and awareness actions and measures will be incorporated into each of the new outcomes in order to aid in the facilitation of change

4.4.3 Each proposed outcome is aligned to the relevant element of the Equality Act 2010 General Duty and to the Council Priorities. The proposed outcomes are shared and adopted by the Education Authority (Aberdeenshire Council’s Education Services) and the Aberdeenshire Licensing Board, as well as applying to all Council services.

4.4.4 Although not required by the legislation, but in line with the approach enshrined in Directorate and Area Plans, it is proposed that actions and measures to achieve them are developed to sit behind the proposed outcomes. In recognition of the fact that the Council is already beyond the statutory deadline for publication of our outcomes, this work will be carried out simultaneously with consultation on the proposed outcomes. This will also allow the opportunity to align any actions and measures to Directorate and Area Plans.

4.4.5 The following six outcomes are the Council’s Proposed Equality Outcomes for 2021 to 2025. They form a structure for equality-related work by the Council, but do not encompass everything we do to address and reduce the inequality experienced by our communities and citizens.

4.4.6 Further information for each of the outcomes is being developed. Depending on what stage of development the associated action plans are at, there will be a slight variation in presentation across Service Delivery, Aberdeenshire Council as an employer and Education Authority. This will include evidence to support why each outcome is a priority, linked strategies and some of the areas for potential action that will be considered as part of the next steps.

Aberdeenshire Council Proposed Equality Outcomes 2021-25	
1	Disabled people have an improved experience in accessing services that meet their needs through more regular and systematic involvement in design of service delivery across the Council.
2	Service users are provided with information accessible to them on services provided by the Council particularly, those who face barriers through disability, language and digital exclusion
3	Aberdeenshire Council (Education & Children’s Services) continue to improve outcomes in relation to attainment and achievement for children and young people including those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, those for whom English is not their first language, Gypsy/Traveller children and young people, those who identify as black and minority ethnic and disabled children and young people.
4	Aberdeenshire Council as an employer create a fair and inclusive place to work where differences between people are celebrated and barriers are reduced for women, disabled people, minority ethnic people and young people

Aberdeenshire Council Proposed Equality Outcomes 2021-25

5	An increased proportion of women, black and minority ethnic people, younger people, disabled people and LGBTI+ are supported to enter employment or training.
6	LGBTI+, disabled, religious, faith and black and minority ethnic people have increased confidence to report hate crime through our work with partners to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prevent hate crime before it happens • encourage people to report hate crime when it happens • improve service responses to victims

4.6 [Formal consultation](#) with stakeholders has commenced and will be ongoing until July and the outcomes of the consultation with the draft outcomes will be considered by Education & Children’s Services (the Education Authority) and the Aberdeenshire Licensing Board in August 2021 before being considered by Full Council on 23 September 2021.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report helps deliver the Strategic Priorities “Education & Health & Wellbeing” within the Pillar “Our People” and “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment”. The review of progress the Council has made towards mainstreaming the Public Sector Equality Duty and in working towards the Equality Outcomes for 2017 – 2021 helps the council to meet it’s requirements under the Equality Act 2010. The development of Equality Outcomes for 2021 – 2025 also ensure the Council meets the duties within the The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		x	
Staffing		x	
Equalities		x	
Fairer Scotland Duty			x
Town Centre First			x
Sustainability		x	
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing			x

5.3 An integrated impact assessment (IIA) has not been carried out as the Gypsy/Traveller Sub Committee are being asked their views as a consultee. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is in development to support the development of the Equality Outcomes and the feedback from the Sub Committee will be incorporated into the IIA.

5.4 Staff within Aberdeenshire Council are committed to furthering activity in support of equalities and this is considered as part of the wider staff implications and embedded in day-to-day activity. There are no financial implications

5.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

ACORP002 – Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation
ACORP006 – Reputation management (including social media)

5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic level

BSSR002 - Communities are confident, resilient and inclusive. Individuals feel secure and in control of their circumstances.

6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make.

6.2 This committee is able to consider this item because it relates to a function of the committee to consider and comment on Council policies and practices that relate to outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers.

RITCHIE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES

Report prepared by Lynne Gravener (Strategic Policy Lead)
Date: 14 June 2021