

## REPORT TO GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE – 24 AUGUST 2021

### EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING AND OUTCOMES REPORT 2021

#### 1 Reason for Report

- 1.1 Committee is recommended to consider the progress made towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and to approve new Equality Outcomes for the next four years.

#### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

1. **consider and comment on the progress made towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2021 attached as Appendix 1 to this report;**
2. **consider and comment on the progress made towards achieving the Equality Outcomes 2017 – 2021 detailed in Appendix 1;**
3. **consider the Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 set out at paragraph 4.6.6 of this report; and**
4. **note that the Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report will be considered by Full Council on 23 September 2021.**

#### 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.
- 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. Aberdeenshire published our draft Equality Outcomes 2021-25 on 31 May 2021 following extensive engagement including community conversations with hard to reach groups.
- 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 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'.
- 4.2 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 strategy and specific actions identified to measure the new equality outcomes for 2021 to 2025.
- 4.3 Inverurie recorded the third highest number of people in receipt of Personal Independence Payments in Aberdeenshire as at May 2021 (behind Peterhead and Fraserburgh). Approximately 1.7% of the town's population received the enhanced mobility element of PIP, which is higher than the Aberdeenshire rate (1.1%). Equality outcome 1 has been developed to help address this issue.

### 4.4 Equality Outcomes 2017 – 2021 - progress

- 4.4.1 The Equality Outcomes 2017 – 2021 were agreed by Full Council on [27 April 2017](#) and an update on progress was provided to Full Council on [26 September 2019](#).
- 4.4.2 Since 2019 and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, a significant amount of work has been undertaken across the Council to mainstream equalities and to work towards the Equality Outcomes 2017-2021. Key areas of progress to highlight include development of the Aberdeenshire New Scots Integration Strategy; review of the work of the GIRFEC Children with a Disability Thematic Group informed through engagement; Foundation Apprenticeships tailoring promotion of and participation in opportunities to different groups; the Homelessness service LGBT Charter Award work; and development of an Equalities Across Recruitment factsheet to provide guidance to managers on equalities considerations when recruiting.
- 4.4.3 The progress towards the Equality Outcomes 2017-2021 is highlighted in Appendix 1.

#### 4.5 Mainstreaming the Equality Duty – progress

- 4.5.1 The Council continues to ensure that equalities are considered across the organisation in its approach to service delivery and planning.
- 4.5.2 The Equalities work within Aberdeenshire is designed to support, embed and promote the equalities agenda throughout Aberdeenshire. There are several elements to the structure including the Equality & Human Rights Strategy Board which reflects services at a senior level and provides direction through a Council wide approach to equalities. This is supported by a network of officer and elected member equality champions and also through the work of the Engagement & Equalities Team based within Business Strategy.
- 4.5.3 Key developments in terms of mainstreaming equality include the development of the Integrated Impact Assessment tool, an online tool which supports services with assessing the potential impact of proposed new policies, activities, changes to services on people with protected characteristics, people facing socio-economic disadvantage, children & young people etc. The Council's approach to Prejudice and Discrimination reporting is monitored and reviewed by the Equalities & Human Rights Strategy Board. Prejudice and Discrimination incidents within schools are recorded through the Bullying & Harassment Module within SEEMiS in line with the other Scottish Local Authorities. Equalities are actively considered by all services during the budget setting process assessing the impact on proposed service changes and the cumulative impact across service on people with protected characteristics and those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

#### 4.6 Equality Outcomes 2021 – 2025

- 4.6.1 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.
- 4.6.2 The following stages outline the approach taken to develop the draft Equality Outcomes: In addition to the overall consultation work there was some targeted consultation with young people and with Council staff to support developing outcomes related to Education and Aberdeenshire Council as an employer.

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 <a href="#">online survey</a> was published in February 2021.
Equalities Citizens' Panel Survey	A series of questions was published in the March 2021 Citizens' Panel which was distributed to 1,100 panel

	members. The panel is broadly representative of Aberdeenshire population. Around 500 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	Conversations were held with British Sign Language (BSL) users within Aberdeenshire. These were facilitated locally by a colleague who uses BSL.
<a href="#">Aberdeenshire Voices on the Pandemic</a>	A report from Community Learning & Development (CLD) which captures feedback from hard to reach groups 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.
Formal Consultation	Survey consulting on the six draft outcomes proposed for Aberdeenshire Council over the next four years. The survey was available online (seven different languages) and paper copies were available from service points and libraries.

4.6.3 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

4.6.4 The above presents only a brief summary of the feedback generated through the outcome development process. The Engagement & Equalities team will be happy to provide more detailed feedback from the various stages of engagement and consultation upon request. Please email [equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) for further information.

4.6.5 Six proposed outcomes have been identified based on evidence gathered through research, from the council's priorities, plan and Directorate plans and

from the engagement activity with our communities. The key actions to progress and measure the impact of these outcomes have begun to be identified but further work will continue with services to develop this. The proposed outcomes, link to council priorities and link to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The evidence to support them as an outcome and key actions and measurements are summarised in Appendix 1.

#### 4.6.6

<b>Aberdeenshire Council Proposed Equality Outcomes 2021-25</b>	
1	In Aberdeenshire, 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	People in Aberdeenshire, particularly those who face barriers through literacy, language and digital exclusion, are provided with accessible information on services provided by the Council, and are supported to access these digitally where appropriate
3	In Aberdeenshire people have opportunities to fulfil their potential throughout life
4	Aberdeenshire Council as an employer continues to 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
5	An increased proportion of women, black and minority ethnic people, younger people, disabled people and LGBTI+ people 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"> <li>• prevent hate crime before it happens</li> <li>• encourage people to report hate crime when it happens</li> <li>• improve service responses to victims</li> </ul>

4.6.7 The revised outcomes for 2021- 2025 build on the work of the previous set. Through an extensive engagement and research programme the new outcomes will set the focus for the council for the next four years, taking account of the work achieved to date.

4.6.8 The six proposed equality outcomes were formally consulted on during June and July 2021 and amendments have been made to the outcomes as a result of feedback received. The consultation responses may be viewed [here](#).

### 4.7 Aberdeenshire Council Workforce Profile and Occupational Segregation

4.7.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 require the Council to gather and use employee information. The data gathered must then be used to help it to better perform the equality duty.

4.7.2 Aberdeenshire Council's [Equal Pay statement, gender pay gap](#) (for teaching and non-teaching staff) and the occupation segregation analysis are published on the council's website.

4.7.3 Information on the composition of the [Council's workforce](#) (teaching and non-teaching) and on the recruitment, development and retention of employees with respect to relevant protected characteristics is summarised and published on the council's website.

## 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 its requirements under the Equality Act 2010. The development of Equality Outcomes for 2021 – 2025 also ensure the Council meets the duties within 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 has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as Appendix 2 and positive impacts have been identified as the equality outcomes are designed to make a positive difference to people with protected characteristics in Aberdeenshire.

5.4 Staff within all services 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):

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 their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and comment on proposals to develop Council policy in line with the Policy Development and Review Framework and make recommendations to the relevant Policy Committees this item in terms of Section B.11.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance.

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DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES**

Report prepared by Lynne Gravener (Strategic Policy Lead)  
Date: 26 July 2021

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## **Part A: Mainstreaming Equality at Aberdeenshire Council: Progress Report**

### **1 Introduction**

In Aberdeenshire, our second set of Equality Outcomes was agreed in 2017, and a progress report published in 2019. In the subsequent two years the Council has had to radically adapt its service provision due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In light of the pandemic, the Council agreed new Strategic Priorities in July 2020. The Council Plan was agreed in September 2020 and the first iteration of Directorate and Area Plans were agreed in the first quarter of 2021.

### **2 Background and Context**

The Equality Act 2010 became law on 1 October 2010 and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplified the law into a single source and ensures that everyone who is protected under law from discrimination, harassment or victimisation is afforded the same level of protection. The Equality Act introduced the concept of nine protected characteristics (PCs), namely

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Act introduced the public sector equality duty which came into force in April 2011. It requires public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to

1. eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
2. advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
3. foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

The Scottish Government introduced a set of specific equality duties to support the better performance of the general duty by public bodies. The specific duties place a statutory duty on the Council to:

- report progress on mainstreaming the equality duty
- publish equality outcomes and report progress

- assess and review policies and practices
- gather and use employment information
- publish gender pay gap information
- publish an equal pay statement
- consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement and
- publish in a manner that is accessible

The focus of this report is on the progress the Council has made in mainstreaming the equality duty, as well as gathering and using the employment information in relation to equality.

### 3 Aberdeenshire

In 2019, Aberdeenshire had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest population in Scotland (261,210). Between 1998 and 2019, the population increased by 15.5% - the 4<sup>th</sup> highest percentage change out of 32 council areas. To put it in context, Scotland's population rose by 7.5%. The 65 to 74 age group saw the largest percentage increase (+72.3%) in Aberdeenshire (Source: [Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment 2020](#)).

Between 2020 and 2041 Aberdeenshire is projected to have a significant population increase of 7.2% - the fifth highest in Scotland and above the overall Scottish growth rate. All age groups are expected to increase however the older age groups are projected to increase at a greater rate.

These changes present significant challenges for the shape and delivery of our public services and the resources required to deliver them. In particular, while most older people do not require formal support, as people live longer, we know from experience that they are likely to develop health conditions which become complex and, as a consequence, require a growing reliance on local services.

The equality profile of Aberdeenshire is as follows:

Protected characteristic	Aberdeenshire profile
<b>Age</b>	The pensionable age group is projected to increase by over 28.7% with the 75+ age group rising by over 94%. Aberdeenshire's child population is expected to decrease by approximately 5,649 by 2043 to 43,384 (based on 2018 figures). That equates to an 11.5% decrease, which is slightly greater than the 10.5% decrease for Scotland as a whole (Source: <a href="#">Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment 2020</a> ).
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	The proportion of adults declaring that they don't have a religion has remained similar since 2015, reported as 55% in 2018. There has been a decrease in the proportion reporting 'Church of Scotland', to 22% in 2018. There has been a marked increase in the proportion declaring themselves as 'Other Christian', up to 20% in 2018 (Source: <a href="#">Scottish Household Survey 2018 data</a> ).

Protected characteristic	Aberdeenshire profile
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	56% of adults in Aberdeenshire were married or in a civil partnership, 29% were single, 10% were divorced or separated, and 5% were widowed or bereaved (Source: <a href="#">Scottish Household Survey 2018 data</a> ).
<b>Race</b>	98.6% of Aberdeenshire's residents identified themselves as White, 1.2% identified as Asian, Asian British or Asian Scottish, and 0.2% as another ethnic group. (Source: <a href="#">Scottish Household Survey 2018 data</a> ).
<b>Disability</b>	6.3% of Aberdeenshire's population had a long-term health problem or disability. 26.9% of the population had one or more health conditions. (Source: Census 2011). In 2018, the Scottish Household Survey reported 2% of respondents declared themselves as permanently sick or disabled.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	In 2018, there were 2,697 births in Aberdeenshire; this was an increase of 1.4% from 2017 (Source: <a href="#">Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment 2020</a> ).
<b>Sex</b>	In 2019, the resident population in Aberdeenshire consisted of 129,900 males and 131,300 females. From that, 141,800 were economically active (85.6% of males and 75.9% of females)
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	98.5% respondents to the Scottish Household Survey in 2018 identified themselves as Heterosexual/Straight and 1.2% as Gay/Lesbian; 0.2% refused to disclose. (Source: <a href="#">Scottish Household Survey 2018 data</a> ).
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	No data available at this time.

## 4 Leadership & Governance

### 4.1 Council Plan

Aberdeenshire Council approved a revised Council Plan in [October 2020](#) which covers the period from 2020 to 2022. In the years since the previous plan was implemented there were a range of issues which caused a shift across Aberdeenshire, not least the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the plan was re-drawn.

The plan is centred around three pillars, Our People, Our Environment and Our Economy. Under those sit strategic priorities and are supported by directorate and area plans. This means everyone understands their part in the delivery of the new priorities and what we can do to help make a difference.

Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership

Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

## 4.2 Directorate and Area Plans

Directorate Plans translate higher level priorities into Directorate level actions. These plans also outline how each service area will deliver on key functions including national regulatory benchmarking requirements. Directorate Plans help the development of Team Delivery Plans so that teams and individuals understand how they contribute to and are responsible for achieving the Council's strategic priorities.

Progress in relation to Directorate plan priorities is reported to Policy Committees twice yearly.

Area Plans reflect the needs and priorities of the area and its communities and link directly to projects and initiatives planned and delivered by services. The focus of Area Plans is the delivery of Directorate Plans at an area level; they provide a clear performance and scrutiny framework. The plans capture the synergies and relationship with Directorate Plans.

## 5 Impact of Covid-19

It is clear that the impact of the Covid-19 crisis has impacted on equality across several key domains: health, economic, education, safety and security, social and wellbeing, housing, digital, and environmental. With the UK having now withdrawn from the EU, the report takes recognition of all these factors and how the Council has worked to support our communities and deal with this and the Covid-19 impacts.

It is also now clear from emerging evidence that the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis arising from the direct and indirect effects of contracting the illness, as well as the lockdown measures put in place to control spread of the virus, are significant and unequal. While the pandemic and lockdown initially resulted in a twin public health and economic crisis, its effects transcend far beyond health and economics, with some impacts potentially having long term consequences.

The Council mobilised to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, with a focus on delivering safe and effective services for those most at risk in our communities. The nature of the pandemic required a swift and proactive response, comprising a number of workstreams to ensure that people in the community were kept safe. Examples of vital work undertaken within this response included: establishing the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub, the development of a staff mobilisation application to create additional community and social care capacity, community testing, ensuring provision of personal protective equipment, maintaining a sufficient workforce to support the delivery of core services and revising local operating and management arrangements.

## 6 Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty, introduced in April 2018, places a duty on certain public bodies in Scotland to consider how to reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic

disadvantage. In practice it means ensuring that the decisions taken for an authority are informed by consideration of socio-economic disadvantage in the local area and the inequalities of outcome experienced by those living in socio-economic disadvantage.

The duty is not only an important means of tackling socio-economic inequality, but its effective implementation will also underpin wider local strategies and obligations including the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (regarding tackling inequality), the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (arising from the Equality Act 2010), as well as the National Performance Framework Outcomes.

The Child Poverty Scotland Act 2017 places a duty on health boards and local authorities to work to reduce child poverty and produce joint annual Local Child Poverty Action Reports.

These duties, along with the Public Sector Equality Duty and Human Rights Act 1998 must underpin recovery and renewal across Scotland.

While we have all been affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic, we know that for some groups, the social, economic and health harms caused by both the virus and associated lockdown measures, will be greater, and that this could have a profound and long-lasting impact, exacerbating already existing inequalities in our communities. The pandemic is likely to drive more individuals and families into poverty and we have already seen significant increases in the unemployment rate and in the number of people applying for Universal Credit.

Understanding these impacts is crucial to the development of our future work programme in relation to poverty. Consequently, while during 2020/21 we continued to progress the essential activity which we have already identified (the [Reducing Poverty LOIP](#)) in relation to poverty and in particular child poverty, we have taken an opportunity to reset and recalibrate our partnership activity, to take account of the impact of the pandemic on our children and families.

This partnership approach will build on the initial Covid-19 response, recovery and renewal work that has already been taken forward by our partners, and the emerging renewal themes, in particular relating to economic recovery and the wellbeing of our communities.

In relation to the financial drivers of poverty, our aspiration in emerging from this crisis must be to build a strong local economy which supports fair work and tackles inequality.

It is important that we take time to understand the particular impact of Covid-19 on our most vulnerable children, families and equality groups and to this end a comprehensive local community impact assessment of the pandemic has been taken forward across our community planning partnership, the findings of which was presented to Elected Members of Aberdeenshire Council in September 2020. Phase 2 of our community impact assessment is currently published for responses, with more targeted work being undertaken to reach seldom heard groups who were under-represented in the previous assessment.

## **Case study 1**

### **Local Voices – Lived Experience Forum**

The Lived Experience Forum was formed in 2019 and comprises 20 parents and 40 school age children from across Aberdeenshire. All are from households with an annual income of less than £15,000. The families are from a range of different backgrounds including the travelling community, lone parents, households with an adult or child who has a disability, those that have experienced domestic violence and those with English as an additional language (EAL). A small percentage of the parents in the forum are not in work, training or volunteering. The views from the forum have challenged the way that Council services are delivered, contributed to continuous improvement practice and the development of training and awareness tools.

A Poverty Engagement Worker has been appointed to work with, and support, families to participate in the forum. One member said “..the worker has been the most supportive person. She has listened and advised, contacted agencies and appropriate charities on my behalf.”

During the pandemic local voices have been used as a sounding board and the voice of reason for services that were being redesigned quickly and the forum has provided an opportunity for families to express their worries, views and experiences relevant to them.

They asked for direct payment to be given to families who were entitled to free school meals. This was put in place within two weeks of lockdown ensuring 100% of uptake of this entitlement.

Additional engagement has been carried out through social media. During February 2021, the page set up to support this project had 167-page likes; the promoted posts reached 6,755 people, with post engagement by 1,728 families.

## **7 Mainstreaming Equality in Service Provision**

Mainstreaming the equality duty is an organisational responsibility. Leadership and employee awareness are central to its success.

### **7.1 Equality Champions and service development**

The Council has developed leads for Violence Against Women & Girls, Gypsy/Travellers, Syrian Refugees

### **7.2 Equality and Human Rights Strategy Board**

The Equalities Strategy Board (EHRSB) is made up of senior employees who have been nominated to represent their relevant council Service and trade union representation. Membership reflects the broad range of services provided by the council and the need for a council-wide approach to equalities. The Board provides direction to ensure Aberdeenshire's ability to comply with The Equality Act 2010 and The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The Board effectively communicates to Service Management Teams the ongoing work of the EHRSB and the CEHRG and highlights the key equalities messages and actions that require to be implemented by Services. The EHRSB meets on a

quarterly basis and is chaired by the Director of Education and Children's Services, who in turn reports to the Chief Executive.

### 7.3 Service Champions

Approximately 40 service champions have been nominated across the Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board. Their role is to support the mainstreaming of equalities by assisting staff when completing Integrated Impact Assessments. The role of Equality Champions is currently being reviewed to support the mainstreaming of equality across the Council.

### 7.4 Elected Member Equality Champions

Nine elected member equality champions who act as a point of contact for any equality related queries which elected members may have. One of the elected member equality champions supports the Aberdeenshire Licensing Board. The role of the elected member champions is to encourage discussion on equality when attending meetings, committees and conferences; to help champion equalities within the local community and with external bodies and partners; to take part in discussions about setting equality outcomes; to represent the council on equality issues during the Best Value Audit and to promote campaigns and articles, as appropriate. Examples of involvement by Elected Members Champions are demonstrated in the following case studies.

#### **Case study 2**

Holocaust Memorial Day takes place every year on January 27 to mark the liberation of Auschwitz, the largest concentration camp. The day remembers the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust in the Second World War and the millions of people killed under Nazi persecution, as well as subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia and Darfur.

The council has previously marked the day with different events, including services at Woodhill House or in local libraries. This year (2021), we published a [video](#) in which Aberdeenshire Council Leader Councillor Andy Kille and Councillor Ross Cassie were joined by two former Westhill Academy pupils who shared their personal experiences of visiting Auschwitz.

Aberdeenshire Libraries also supported the day via their website and social media channels, including a presentation and further reading to about the Holocaust and genocides.

This year, the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day was 'Be the light in the darkness'; a call to action for everyone supporting HMD to consider the different types of darkness that still exist in society today and the different measures we can take to be the light against it.

Everyone marking the day was encouraged to light a candle in memory of all those who were murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi persecution and in genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

## 7.5 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The council has recently launched an online Integrated Impact Assessment tool which ensures that policies and strategies are assessed in line with the general and specific duties as well as impacts relating to climate change, children's rights and Fairer Scotland Duty. The system allows IIAs to be tracked, updated and quality assessed. The system also allows for a summary of the IIA to be published onto the Council's website.

To support the rollout of the new online IIA Toolkit, a training package was developed in-house and is being rolled out to all employees involved in undertaking IIAs.

An awareness session on the new IIA Toolkit was also delivered to our Elected Members to ensure that not only were they aware of their responsibility in relation to decision making, but also how the toolkit has been designed, how to complete the IIA and where they can access the information.

## 7.6 Prejudice and Discrimination Reporting (PDR)

The Prejudice and Discrimination Report can be used to report behaviour such as, but not restricted to: offensive language, threatening behaviour, physical violence, abusive text messages, emails or comments on social media, spreading rumours, being ignored or excluded, having belongings stolen or damaged, based on having one or more of the protected characteristics.

A report on prejudice and discrimination incidents is provided to the council's Equalities and Human Rights Strategy Board twice a year for monitoring purposes.

Aberdeenshire Council is recognised as a third-party reporting centre for Hate Crime. Police Scotland are aware that some people may not feel comfortable reporting the matter directly to the police and as a result they work in partnership with other organisations which can perform the role of a third-party reporting centre. There are two third party reporting centres within Aberdeenshire:

- Aikey Brae Traveller Site, Maud, Peterhead (Gypsy/Traveller Matters)
- Aberdeenshire Council, Gordon House, Inverurie.

## 7.7 Committee Reporting Structure

Committee reports have taken account of equalities issues through the council's Equality Impact Assessment process, and in the future through the Integrated Impact Assessment process. We are working to ensure that we are consciously considering equalities from the start to the finish of work activities and incorporating reviews where appropriate.



## 7.8 Budget Setting

Equalities considerations have been built into the budget setting process. With the new Integrated Impact Assessment process the budget development for future years will continue to be assessed for impacts on people with protected characteristics and those facing socio-economic disadvantage as well as other areas such as Health & Well Being and impacts on children and young people, for example.

## 7.9 Communications: Getting the message out to employees and service users

### 7.9.1 *Intranet*

We continually update our equalities pages on Arcadia (our employee intranet) which provides comprehensive guidance on all equalities matters to support employees when dealing with equalities issues.

### 7.9.2 *Equalities and Diversity Calendar*

We have previously compiled and maintained an Equalities and Diversity calendar with key dates relating to Protected Characteristics. Every month we select dates from this calendar and promote them through articles on our intranet. The purpose being to highlight that equalities considerations are part of everyday life. Awareness is also raised for the general public through news releases and social media. Recent examples of news releases are:

[Holocaust Memorial Day](#) – Aberdeenshire Council website – January 2020

[International Workers Memorial Day](#) – Aberdeenshire Council website – April 2020

[Holocaust Memorial Day](#) – Aberdeenshire Council website – January 2021

The calendar is under review to look at different ways to recognise and celebrate diversity in Aberdeenshire.

### 7.9.3 *Social Media*

We continue to use social media to communicate with employees and residents. Here is an example of a tweet in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History month which links to a detailed web article:



As part of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History month, this week's article focuses on discrimination: [online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/news/rele...](https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/news/rele...) #grthm #grthm2020

1:04 PM · Jun 15, 2020 · Twitter Web App

The council also uses Yammer on Office 365 to keep staff informed.

#### 7.9.4 *Interpretation and Translation Policy*

We continue to develop our provision of interpretation services and access to translated information. Our interpretation service provides face-to-face interpreters (when safe to do so), telephone interpretation and translation of key documents to ensure access to services for all our residents. Our key publications include a statement explaining how members of the public can request the document in another format is included on the front page. This statement includes the top four most requested languages in Aberdeenshire.

As part of our commitment to ensuring access to services, the council closely monitors the quality of services provided by its external suppliers for the provision of interpretation, translation and transcription services. The Education & Children's Service provides support for learners and their families undertaking a consultation, advisory, training and teaching role through the English as an Additional Language service.

Working with our partners and neighbouring authorities, a guide to living and working in the North East has been produced in Arabic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Russian.

## 8 **Mainstreaming Equality Partnership Working**

The Council has a long and successful history of partnership working and this approach has been strengthened during Covid-19. Our specific partnership arrangements in relation to the equality agenda include the following:

- Scottish Councils' Equality Network
- Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Group
- Gypsy/ Traveller Sub Committee
- Gypsy/ Traveller Inter-agency Group
- Gypsy/Traveller Officer Group (GTOG)
- The Ethnic Minority Forum (EMF)
- Integrate Grampian
- Peterhead Inclusion Forum
- Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)

- Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women Partnership

## 8.1 Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Group

The Tackling Poverty & Inequalities group was set up by the Community Planning Partnership to coordinate strategic development across partners.

The group's priorities are:

- Reducing the number of children / people living in poverty
- Preventing children / people falling into poverty
- Enabling children to live poverty free in adult life and
- Improving the wellbeing of people living in poverty.

There are several partnership groups that feed into the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic Partnership Group which ensures consistency of delivery across Aberdeenshire. These groups have their own development plans which are reflected within the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Priorities. All of the partnership groups, including the Strategic Partnership Group annually reflect, evaluate and agree priorities.

The partnership approach that has been developed has delivered positive outcomes for those communities, individuals and families who are experiencing a level of difficulty within this economic climate.

The main areas of development will be to:

- Continue to lead on reducing Child Poverty across Aberdeenshire which is a statutory duty
- Continue to lead on the Community Planning Partnership LOIP which is Reducing Poverty
- Review and develop the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic Partnership group to ensure integration with other priorities and policy development
- Secure additional resources to ensure accessibility of services across Aberdeenshire
- Increase partnership working to continue to streamline services creating a more holistic approach to service delivery and
- Ensure the voice of those with lived experience is heard, ensuring they have ownership of this agenda.

## 8.2 Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women Partnership

The Aberdeenshire Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership is committed to preventing and eradicating violence at a local and strategic level and ensuring the right support is available and accessible to women and children who have experienced abuse.

It brings together Aberdeenshire Council, Grampian Women's Aid, Police Scotland, Rape Crisis Grampian, Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Grampian, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Scottish Fire Service and Alcohol and Drugs Action. Partners have listened to those who have experienced

abuse and used that insight to shape the strategy. The partnership's aim is to improve agency responses to women, children and young people who have experienced abuse.

The Partnership has four key priorities:

- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.
- Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people.
- Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

## **9 Mainstreaming Equality in Procurement**

The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires local authorities to comply with the Sustainable Procurement Duty in all regulated contracts. The 2014 Act specifically refers to “reducing inequality in the area” in the definition of “improving wellbeing”.

The Commercial and Procurement Shared Service (CPSS) Community Benefits/Sustainable Procurement guidance has a strong focus on the Public Sector Equality Duty, Fair Work Practices and a wide range of other socio-economic considerations designed to alleviate various forms of poverty and disadvantage under the Fairer Scotland Duty and National Performance Framework.

### **Supplier Development Programme**

Supplier events and bulletins are used to raise awareness of tender opportunities and how to do business with the Council. The CPSS were associate members of the Supplier Development Programme (SDP) during 2019/20. The SDP helps businesses that have little experience of tendering to become ready to bid for public service contracts. The associate membership status provides locally registered suppliers the chance to attend events and access webinars. One of the SDP's key objectives is to support their members to meet the Sustainable Procurement Duty and community benefit requirements which can embrace “fair work”, equalities and a number of socio-economic considerations that can have their origins in protected characteristics.

### **Approach to Community Benefits**

In 2019-20, procurement activity has been guided by the commitments and aspirations expressed in the Council's Joint Procurement Strategy. The CPSS Mission Statement commits to delivery of: “ethical and sustainable value for money solutions that support the operational needs and wider strategic aims of the councils and the communities they serve to further local and national priorities to the fullest extent possible.”

### **Real Living Wage/Living Wage Employer Accreditation**

In Aberdeenshire, Real Living Wage (RLW) is promoted as an element of Fair Work Practices in every regulated contract where it is proportionate and relevant to do so. However, payment of Real Living Wage/Living Wage Employer Accreditation is not permissible as a mandatory condition of participation in public procurement and cannot be considered as award criteria in isolation, as it would unfairly disadvantage supplier employers not accredited or for genuine reasons, suppliers unable to implement payment of Real Living Wage. As an organisation, Aberdeenshire Council promotes fair work principles including Real Living Wage through our procurement activity. Where proportionate and relevant to the procurement, bidders must address a wide range of elements relating to fair work practices (including equality of pay, opportunity and family friendly policies promoting fairness and work/life balance.)

In April 2021, Aberdeenshire Council commenced the journey towards becoming an accredited RLW employer. As an employer, RLW has been paid to all directly employed staff since 2013. Organisational policies affecting directly employed staff and job applicants are progressive and proactive in terms of equality.

Living Wage Scotland provided feedback in April 2021, “Aberdeenshire Council’s commitment to strongly promote and encourage fair work principles including real Living Wage through procurement activity, alongside working through the process of becoming an accredited Living Wage employer will help increase awareness of the business benefit and social value of Living Wage accreditation among suppliers and could make a significant impact on contracted workers in low pay sectors.”

## **10 Mainstreaming Equality in Employment**

### **10.1 Workplace Profile**

Aberdeenshire Council is the largest employer within Aberdeenshire and believes that the recruitment and employment of Council employees at all levels is an important activity through which mainstreaming can be achieved. By having a more diverse workforce the Council can provide better quality services to all our citizens.

Aberdeenshire Council aims to have a diverse workforce which reflects the communities we serve. We seek to achieve this by ensuring the operation of fair and consistent employment practices that take into account the diversity of groups and individuals in our community. By doing this, we aim to be an employer of choice and to be recognised as an employer that provides fair employment opportunities for all. Further information in relation to our workforce profile, gender pay gap, equal pay and occupational segregation for Aberdeenshire can be found at:

Appendix 1 [Aberdeenshire Council's workforce profile](#)

Appendix 2 [Aberdeenshire Education Authority's workforce profile](#)

Appendix 3 [Equal pay statement, occupational segregation and gender pay gap](#)

## 10.2 Apprenticeships

The Resourcing Team within Legal & People continue to develop Modern Apprenticeships across the council. Modern Apprenticeships incorporate a work-based qualification (SCQF 6 or 7/SVQ level 2 or 3) earned while gaining valuable work experience in your chosen career path. In 2020, the council employed 60 Apprentices, and continued to recruit in some service areas with the ongoing COVID pandemic.

The council continue to work in partnership with Robert Gordon University to make use of the Graduate Apprenticeship scheme allowing employees to undertake blended learning over 4 years to obtain an industry recognised degree in 5 career areas. We currently have 24 Graduate Apprentices with 4 established in 2020 in 2 further career areas. The council also partnered with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to offer over 200 foundation apprenticeships in 2020. This offers work-based learning and a National 4 or 5 Certificate to school pupils S3-5 in a wide variety of work areas.

In April 2020, we developed our initial assessments and learning plans for all inhouse delivery of modern apprenticeships. These have enabled us to plan, with modern apprentices, their learning journeys. We have been able to identify additional support and learning needs, strengths and areas for improvements and effectively plan for development and delivery of learning. Feedback from the assessment team has been positive, identifying that modern apprentices are progressing, meeting targets set and engaging in their learning. Reports from SDS show that both our retention and achievement rates are 100%.

## 10.3 Digital Works Programme

Digital Works is an employability programme designed to help care experienced young people build skills and experience required to find a job. This included a relevant work placement (paid the Scottish Local Government Living Wage). Three young people completed the programme, two now in full time employment. Regrettably Covid restrictions meant no more young people could be supported through the programme due to the face-to-face elements of employability skills, mock interview and paid work placement. Looking to the future, the group is continuing to keep in contact with updates relating to employability skills delivery and work placement feasibility. We are looking at potential young people who will be ready to start the programme next year and how we can support them to be ready.

## 10.4 Kickstart Scheme

The council will be delivering the national Kickstart Scheme which is designed to create new job placements for 18- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. Information has been disseminated throughout services within the council who may be able to provide an opportunity to a young person.

## 10.5 Carer Positive Award

The council gained its Carer Positive Established level award in 2018, which means the council is recognised by Carer Positive as an established employer who provides a supportive working environment for employees who also have an unpaid caring role out of the workplace. A Carers Guidance Factsheet for staff was updated in 2019. It highlights relevant policies to be aware of, online courses to increase awareness of those with a caring role, and links to external support organisations.

## 10.6 Development of SQA Centre for SVQ's Centre Procedures

The centre has developed the reasonable adjustments policy within the centre procedures document, to allow us to continue to give all candidates equal opportunity of assessment, whilst still maintaining the integrity of SQA qualifications. The policy guides assessment staff in working with SVQ candidates, and their line managers, where reasonable adjustments can be made to reflect the candidates' natural ways of working and learning and enable the candidate to produce evidence to demonstrate and determine competence. The procedure was implemented in January 2021 and although still early to assess the impact, the procedure has already been used and has enabled a candidate to continue and progress with their SVQ.

## 10.7 Equal Pay

The Council is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity in employment and believes that employees should receive equal pay for the same or broadly similar work, or work rated as equivalent and for work of equal value, regardless of their protected characteristics. To achieve this, pay systems require to be transparent, based on objective criteria and free from unlawful bias. Our [equal pay statement](#) can be found on our website.

# 11 Mainstreaming Equality in Employee Development

## 11.1 Employee information

Aberdeenshire Council greatly values the contribution of its employees in the delivery of services to local communities. As an employer, we are committed to equality and treat our employees with the dignity, respect and consideration they deserve, helping staff to reach their full potential at work. We also recognise that a diverse organisation with a range of abilities, experience and skills is more likely to be sensitive to the needs of the diverse community that we serve.

As outlined in our previous mainstreaming reports, the Council continues to provide opportunities for flexible working practices balancing both individual and organisational needs.

## 11.2 Training and Development: Equalities and Diversity E-Learning

To ensure all employees and Elected Members are trained and developed to fulfil their role and responsibilities within the Equality Act 2010 a number of equality and diversity training courses are delivered.

Equality and Diversity training is provided for Elected Members and is mandatory for all new employees. It is delivered through an online training course designed in partnership with the Learning and Development team and the Policy Lead (Engagement and Equalities). The course is mandatory for all new employees.

Training on integrated impact assessments will be made available to staff and elected members via online sessions. An e-learning course will also be developed to support staff undertaking assessments in the future.

Three other training courses delivered support and good practice in equalities and diversity in the workplace, namely:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Stress Management and Reduction
- Mentally Healthy Workplace training

We continue to review our training in relation to employee development to ensure that the training remains relevant.

## 12 Mainstreaming Equality in Education Services

We cannot begin this section of the report without acknowledging the impact of Covid-19 on our schools and early learning education centres. Following the lockdown announcement in March 2020, schools and nurseries were required to close and we opened our Childcare Hubs for children of keyworkers and some of our most vulnerable young people.

Education and Children's Services (ECS) provides education across the predominantly rural area of Aberdeenshire. There are 17 academies, 150 primary schools, 90 of which have a nursery, and 4 special schools. In addition, there are 39 enhanced provision sites. Partner providers offer early years' education and childcare in 77 settings. In 2019 there were 35,719 pupils in Aberdeenshire primary and secondary schools. The number of children registered in local authority and partnership pre-school education in 2019 was 5148.

Education and Children's Services provides a wide range of services which make a positive difference to our vulnerable learners, service users, families and communities. As a result of a range of self-evaluation activities and external scrutiny from bodies such as Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate, work takes place continuously to improve performance across a range of measures, including attainment and achievement.

Education and Children's Services is represented on Aberdeenshire Council's Equalities and Human Rights Strategy Board. We continue to make good links across the Service with other



functional groups; for example, the Service's work with the Resourcing Team in Developing the Young Workforce.

## 12.1 Supporting Attainment and Wellbeing

### 12.1.1 *Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)*

PEF of £8,467,320 has been received over the past three years. Funding is based on closing the attainment gap and considers free school meal entitlement. In particular, it is there to help the school support children who experience barriers to learning and who might be falling behind or not getting the same chances in their education because their family is experiencing poverty or other financial difficulties

All schools across Aberdeenshire have used PEF since 2016, to provide wellbeing, literacy and/or numeracy interventions such as:

- extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- PEF supported additional training and resources.
- relational, self-esteem and ambition building interventions.
- counselling services.
- nurture practices.
- 1:1 support delivered via PEF assistants, home school link worker and/or teaching staff.
- attendance improving interventions such as soft start and breakfast club

School PEF evaluations 2019/20, indicated the majority of schools implemented successful wellbeing interventions. Pupils and families report school interventions positively impact wellbeing. Schools highlighted increased attendance, greater pupil engagement, improved behaviour and lower exclusions as evidence of effective PEF interventions. Attainment data for some schools suggested an increase in attainment as a result of PEF initiatives.

Current PEF initiatives with Third Sector partners, such as Garioch Community Garden and Aberlour Child Care Trust, provide support to vulnerable families and pupils. Equity Audit findings suggest this support is highly valued by pupils, families and schools. School and families reported these partnerships foster positive attitudes and culture towards learning. Strengthened relationships between pupil, school and parent/carer are evident.

### 12.1.2 *School Counsellors*

Aberdeenshire Council has developed its own school counselling provision by employing School Counsellors using clearly defined criteria regarding qualifications and experience. The expected shortfall of appropriately qualified and experienced School Counsellors has been addressed by commissioning an external provider to support Trainee Counsellors through an accredited diploma course. Currently there are 2 School Counsellors and 10 trainee School Counsellors. A standard, consistent model of counselling across Aberdeenshire will ensure equity of provision regarding the therapeutic model of school counselling. This work began in 2020 and will contribute to improved

mental health outcomes for children and young people aged 10 and above and ensure that school counselling sits alongside and complements wellbeing support and services.

#### 12.1.3 *Foundation Apprenticeships – Promoting Gender Balance*

Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) provide young people with real experiences of the world of work, whilst gaining a qualification at the same level as a Scottish Higher (SCQF Level 6). A review and mapping of the uptake of apprenticeships across protected characteristics from previous FA uptake was carried out in order to identify gaps. This enables improved targeting to maximise opportunities for those with protected characteristics to participate in FA. Gender equalities sessions were built into Developing the Young Workforce Team development sessions with school staff. Promoting gender balance increases understanding of gender imbalances, of equity gaps in participation and achievement in STEM, and of other subject areas and occupations. Examples are boys studying Children and Young People courses, and girls studying Engineering (piloted this year). Although there were, proportionately, slightly more boys in 2020-21 apprenticeships than in the previous year, overall the uptake for girls continues to exceed that of boys. Across the frameworks there is considerable variation in the gender split, ranging from 100% male (IT Hardware & System Support) to 90% female for both of the Care frameworks. We are careful to avoid stereotypical genders when creating FA marketing materials and are aware there is still work still to be done. A small number of young people are transitioning genders. As an FA team we have made steps to accommodate their needs where possible.

#### 12.1.4 *Care Experienced Pupils Support*

Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) funding of £548,600 has been received over the past two years. In 2019, the authority's CECYP funding supported the appointment of a virtual headteacher (VHT) to improve wellbeing, attainment and outcomes of CECYP. Whilst schools have the overall responsibility for the education of children in their care, it is envisaged the VHT will provide an extra layer of support for the pupil and family and act as the main point of contact for the team around the child.

The following initiatives were highlighted by the authority as positively supporting CECYP:

- Motivation, Commitment and Resilience (MCR) Pathways - a programme to raising self-esteem and promote positive outcomes.
- Digital Works - employability programme working 1:1 with young people supporting digital skills development and work experience; supporting career choices.

Young people considered vulnerable and thought to be on the “edge of care”, as highlighted in Scottish Government guidance, were also encouraged to participate.

Almost all CECYP authority initiatives supported mental health and well-being. The VHT reported feedback from pupils, parents and staff was positive suggesting

- pupils were able to access the curriculum in a more successful way
- increased positive and sustainable relationships

- increased skills development
- improved attainment

## 12.2 Children's Rights

### 12.2.1 *Rights Respecting Schools*

Across Aberdeenshire, schools are engaged in the UNICEF accredited programme, The UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award, which supports schools to embed children's human rights in their ethos and culture. The Award recognises the achievement in putting the [UN Convention on the Right of the Child](#) at the heart of a school's practice to improve wellbeing and help all children and young people realise their potential. The Award is based on principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. Schools are required to implement three evidence-based strands that cover the leadership of the school, knowledge and understanding of children's rights, ethos and relationships and the empowerment of children and young people. Schools who participated have reported a positive impact on school ethos, improved relationships and wellbeing, leading to better learning and behaviour. Young people learn new skills in how to respect themselves and others and how to actively participate in the life of their school, their community and in global action.

There are three levels to the Award:

- Bronze: Rights Committed,
- Silver: Rights Aware
- Gold: Rights Respecting

### 12.2.2 *Children's Rights and Participation – Multi-agency Steering Group*

In March 2021, the Scottish Parliament passed a bill to incorporate the United Nations Rights of the Child into Scots law. Members of staff from various teams across Aberdeenshire Council are now part of a Children's Rights Steering Group which also has representation from young people, parents, NHS and Police. The group will lead a review of the strategic direction and focus for upholding Children's Rights and promoting youth participation and decision-making across Aberdeenshire and ensure all teams in Aberdeenshire Council are aware of the implications and expectations of incorporation. The group will make recommendations to the GIRFEC Strategic Group outlining identified areas for improvement and/or development to inform an action plan. The work of the Steering Group will both inform and be informed by the GIRFEC Strategic Group.

### 12.2.3 *Developing our Curriculum to Support Equality and Inclusivity*

Schools adopt flexible approaches to ensuring the curriculum is inclusive and supports equality and diversity. The following case studies are examples of such an approach:

### 12.2.4 *Children's University*

Currently, fourteen schools participate in the children's university. The programme aims to address disadvantage by removing barriers to wider learning. By recognising wider achievement the programme supports young people to recognise and value skills and seeks to raise aspirations. Young people and staff report positive changes in attitude to learning and increased

engagement. Participation rates are expected to increase by 50% this session; with the engagement of a further fourteen schools.

#### 12.2.5 *Wood Group Partnership – Excelerate Programme*

Four schools participated in the Wood Foundation programme, Excelerate. Six academies - Kemnay, Banff, Portlethen, Aboyne, Mackie and Alford Academy. Excelerate will support the development of young people's readiness for work by enabling schools and partners to deliver high-quality, diverse pathways that further realise the opportunities of Scotland's curriculum through interventions such as project-based learning.

The programme, which is being delivered in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, has the following goals:

- Upskilled, confident teachers with strengthened pedagogy
- Deeper relationships and activities between schools, employers and the wider community
- More high-quality and diverse learning pathways
- Engaged, informed, motivated and empowered young people

The Wood Foundation has committed more than three years of in-depth, reflective, international research in developing the basis of Excelerate. It is now working in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, the four pilot schools, industry and communities to co-create and collaborate in the delivery of innovative curricular opportunities driven by local context.

The immersive professional learning being offered to schools and partners are vital bedrocks of the programme, promoting confidence and inspirational new approaches. Business & Community Support Officers are now in post acting as the liaison between the establishments, industry and community which will drive real-world contexts for learning.

Following a year of training, strategic review, community coaching, and relationship building, schools have started to implement learning with their pupils in the 2020/21 academic year. Educators will continue to be exposed to professional learning opportunities in order to further and deepen their learning.

#### 12.2.6 *Peterdeen/Fraserdeen*

Led by Aberdeenshire Council, the PeterDeen scholarship has been developed in partnership with Aberdeen FC Community Trust, Peterhead-based Score Group plc and Peterhead Academy. The project delivers a curriculum through which students are encouraged to celebrate their own achievements and develop as independent, responsible and creative young people with a lifelong interest in learning and self-development. Participating pupils have undertaken a series of practical, accredited courses that cross the field of school, sport and business.

The initiative, which was launched in August 2018, was extended to Fraserburgh in September 2019, as FraserDeen was established. The young people taking part in FraserDeen enjoyed the benefit of NESCol (North East Scotland College) facilities, tailored inputs from the council's Work

With Young People Team, a number of core classes at Fraserburgh Academy and of course the expert coaching and training delivered by Aberdeen FC Community Trust.

Attendance rates from participating pupils increased from below 40% to beyond 90%. The alternative curriculum specially devised for them includes coaching sessions and the opportunity to focus on skills for life as well as continuing to work on core subjects such as English and Maths.

## 12.3 Youth Engagement

### 12.3.1 *Pupil Participation Forum (PPF)*

The PPF (made up of 4 young people from each secondary school in Aberdeenshire) have continued to meet regularly and have been involved in the following:

- Launching the Health and Wellbeing Young Leaders programme (September 2019). This is currently on pause due to Covid-19 but the PPF will hopefully be able to relaunch the programme in September 2021 and run the showcase event in June 2022. Health and Wellbeing Young Leaders is a programme to support young people in secondary schools to investigate health needs in their school and community with the support of their Public Health Co-ordinators and to create a programme of activities/events to help address the identified need(s). The showcase event allows all participating schools to share the work they have done, the impact it has had and to choose a winning school by judging against the criteria for the programme.
- The PPF have worked on creating a wellbeing resource made by young people for young people. It has been made using the Five Ways to Wellbeing and once launched can be accessed by pupils for wellbeing support and will compliment work being done by CLD Young People team on peer to peer wellbeing support.
- PPF members have also been involved in meetings with the Education and Children's Services Committee on the impact of Covid-19 to help ensure that the educational provision in the recovery phase supports all young people.

### 12.3.2 *Youth Voice - CLD Working with Young People's Team*

- Aberdeenshire Community Learning Development (CLD)
- Aberdeenshire Youth Forum (AYF)
- Aberdeenshire Youth Council (AYC)
- Local Community Youth Platforms:
  - Aberdeenshire Youth Bank
  - Aberdeenshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Peer Educators
  - National and International Youth Engagement Initiatives and Conferences

## **Case Study 3 Period Poverty**

Access to free sanitary products in Aberdeenshire enables those who require sanitary products to access these free of charge in a way that respects dignity and promotes equality. All schools in Aberdeenshire provide free sanitary products to young people who need them.

Guiding principles have been issued to schools to help protect dignity and reduce stigma and engagement with young people helped to shape the roll out of sanitary product provision. An [online order system](#) was developed and is operational so that during COVID-19, for those who are educated at home and for provision during the holidays, young people can still access products. A public buildings roll out has been initiated to enable access to free sanitary products for the wider community- impacted by buildings closures due to COVID-19 and voluntary organisations were provided with sanitary products to enable access to free products in communities.

This work has meant that young people who previously may have missed out on education by not attending school due to not having access to products are able to access products when they need them in a way that respects dignity and reduces stigma.

### ***Adapting during the Pandemic***

#### Digital Access

In 2020, an audit of pupil device access established:

- 4174 pupils were at risk of digital exclusion.
- 800 pupils had no device to access online learning, with 400 pupils identified as vulnerable.
- 400 pupils had no internet access, with 200 pupils identified as vulnerable.

In 2020, Aberdeenshire received £1,320,234 Connecting Scotland funding. 4100 devices have been allocated as at November 2020. The authority continues to work with partners to address digital inequality.

A further 1184 devices were delivered during February and March 2021. These are a mixture of Connecting Scotland devices and 552 devices funded by Aberdeenshire Trust. In addition, 430 mifi devices, with unlimited data sims, have been allocated to pupils / families to enable connectivity. The council is awaiting further information from Connecting Scotland regarding the possibility of further funding to meet identified continuing unmet need for devices.

#### Educational Psychology Support

Following school building closures in 2020, parents and staff had access to educational psychology service supports such as, a parents and staff helpline, signposting and virtual consultations. Equity Audit findings indicate pupils and families regarded educational psychology supports as effective.

#### Staff Wellbeing

In 2020, authority staff wellbeing events focussed on relationships between staff, understanding secondary trauma, relaxation and calming techniques. Staff reported the training positively impacted their wellbeing.

### **13 The Aberdeenshire Licensing Board**

At the time of setting new equality outcomes in 2017 there were three divisional licensing boards in Aberdeenshire representing North, Central and South Aberdeenshire. The Divisional Boards approved a revised Equalities Policy and Action Plan to cover the period 2017 – 2021.

In January 2020, Aberdeenshire Council resolved to dissolve the divisional licensing boards and replace them with one Licensing Board to cover Aberdeenshire.

The new Aberdeenshire Licensing Board was appointed and first met on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020, at which meeting, the Licensing Board formally adopted the Equalities Policy approved by its predecessor Boards and appointed one of the ten members of the Board to act as an Equalities Service Champion alongside one of the Depute Clerks to the Board.

#### **Effect of the Pandemic**

The Aberdeenshire Licensing Board was formed just as the Covid Pandemic was taking effect. As a result, the Board has not yet met face to face, having had to rely on online meetings to continue their business during this time.

The Board does not employ any staff. Instead, it is administered by Aberdeenshire Council staff. All licensing staff have been, and continue, to work from home as a result of the pandemic.

Many licensed premises have had to close for extended periods over the last two years and a lot of work has been carried out to enable the trade to adapt to new ways of working, at the same time officers were adapting to new work patterns and to establish ways to keep the Licensing Board and the Licensed Trade informed as to what was happening, how and when licences could be applied for and in ensuring the licence process was sufficiently streamlined in order to enable as many licensed premises as possible to be able to trade within the requirements of the Covid regulations as set out by the Scottish Government.

#### **Accessibility Standards**

The Aberdeenshire Licensing Board adopted the Council's corporate report style, embedding equalities into Board Agendas, Board reports and Board Meetings.

This included adopting the Council's accessibility standards for all documentation. All policy and procedure documents adopted or approved by the Board on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 were then accessibility checked to ensure compliance before publication on the Board's website.

#### **Disabled Access and Facilities Statements<sup>1</sup>**

As of 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 was amended<sup>2</sup> requiring all applicants applying for new licences to lodge a Disabled Access and Facilities Statement with their application. The form of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/licensing-scotland-act-2005-guidance-completing-disabled-access-facilities-statement/documents/>

<sup>2</sup> Section 179 Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010

the Statement is prescribed under Regulation. It does not form part of any licence issued by the Licensing Board.

In 2020, 13 applications for new premises licences required to lodge a Disabled Access and Facilities Statement

In 2021, to date, 12 applications for new premises licences required to lodge a Disabled Access and Facilities Statement.

### **Integrated Impact Assessments**

The Board has also adopted the use of Integrated Impact Assessments as part of the development of policy and in respect of individual applications where potential impacts on persons with protected characteristics arise. These will replace the previously used Equality Impact Assessments.

There are two relevant applications in respect of which Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out and considered as part of Licensing Decisions

#### **Case Study 4**

The Central Aberdeenshire Divisional Licensing Board 2019

Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence for Premises in Inverurie inclusive of an outside drinking area. Objections were received from nearby residents. Some of these Objections were lodged late.

One late objection to the application identified matters which potentially impacted on persons with disabilities, one of the protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared.

The Board determined that justice could not be done without considering the terms of the late objection and so the Equality Impact Assessment was circulated to Board Members alongside the objection, the applicant having had sight of both in advance of the hearing.

OUTCOME: the equality considerations did not outweigh the requirements of the legal test as the Board could attach conditions to mitigate the impact on all persons affected, including those with protected characteristics. The application was therefore granted in compliance with the Legal Test set out in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, but with appropriate conditions to mitigate the impact on persons living in the immediate area of the licensed premises.

#### **Case Study 5**

*The Aberdeenshire Licensing Board 2020*

The premises licensed in Case 1 above, applied to vary the terms of their premises licence. The variation was to amend one of the additional conditions attached to the licence when the Central Divisional Licensing Board granted the premises a licence.

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as objections had identified a negative impact on persons with protected characteristics if the variation were to be approved. The EIA was circulated with the Board report to all parties. The EIA identified that the impact could be mitigated if the Board opted to vary the terms of the existing condition rather than remove it, in relation to the outside area.

The Board opted to grant the variation subject to a varied condition rather than to remove the condition as sought by the applicants.



## Part B: Progress on Equality Outcomes: 2017 – 2021

All public sector organisations are required to set Equality Outcomes every four years. This report covers the end of the four yearly Equality Outcome reporting period and is the second review of progress since the outcomes were established in 2017.

National guidance on setting equality outcomes states that they should be proportionate and relevant to the functions and strategic priorities of the organisations setting them, and that they may include both short and long-term benefits for people with protected characteristics. Our Equality Outcomes have been developed as short to medium term (one to four years) and link with both longer term and national outcomes.

A number of these equality outcomes link with already existing policies and strategies. This is to help embed the outcomes in our activities and drive a more focused effort on areas for improvement specifically to improve equality and reduce inequalities.

In 2017, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Education and Children’s Service and Aberdeenshire Licensing Board agreed six outcomes to work towards.

<b>Equality Outcome 1:</b>	Safer and better decision-making will be achieved as a result of being better informed of Equality & Diversity matters
<b>Equality Outcome 2:</b>	To promote a better understanding of the needs of people of different race and develop strategies which support them
<b>Equality Outcome 3:</b>	Develop a better understanding of the needs of people with a disability and develop and promote strategies which ensure access to council services and which support them in education and employment
<b>Equality Outcome 4:</b>	Develop a better understanding of the needs of LGBT people as employees and customers, develop and cascade strategies which minimise bullying and harassment in schools and the community. Achieve measurably reduced levels of prejudice and discrimination against the LGBT community.
<b>Equality Outcome 5:</b>	Aberdeenshire Council’s recruitment is implemented with fairness and transparency and fully supports people with Protected Characteristics.
<b>Equality Outcome 6:</b>	There will be a more inclusive culture whereby all employees understand and respect difference.

### Equalities Community Survey 2021

In terms of progress of the 2017-21 equality outcomes, some key points of feedback relating to those outcomes include:

- 38% of respondents agreed decision making in the Council is informed by equality and diversity matters

- 37% of respondents agreed that services meet the needs of all people and communities in Aberdeenshire
- The area which respondents thought had deteriorated the most was access to council services for people who have a disability
- The areas which respondents thought had improved the most in recent years were the Council understanding the needs of LGBTI+ people and understanding the needs of people with a disability
- When asked specifically about employment practice of Aberdeenshire Council: 47% agreed that the Council is an inclusive employer
- 31% agreed the Council has a workforce which is representative of diverse communities
- Under half of respondents agreed that the Council takes a fair and transparent approach when recruiting staff.

#### Aberdeenshire Citizens' Panel Survey March 2021

In terms of progress of the 2017-21 equality outcomes, some key points of feedback relating to those outcomes include:

- Around one third of respondents agreed that Aberdeenshire Council employees understand the challenges facing all people in communities in Aberdeenshire
- A similar number agreed Aberdeenshire councillors respond to the needs of all people and communities in Aberdeenshire
- The areas which respondents thought had improved the most in recent years related to access to Council services for disabled people and an improved understanding of their needs, improved understanding of needs of people from different ethnic backgrounds and racial origins and an improvement in the support available in education and employment.

### 13.1 Equality Outcome 1: Safer and better decision-making will be achieved as a result of being better informed of Equality & Diversity matters

#### Our Aims

- Elected Members demonstrate their understanding of the needs of those with protected characteristics
- Senior officers demonstrate their understanding of the needs of those with protected characteristics
- Increased awareness of the key equality resources (Equality page, translation and Interpreting services, Equality Calendar, Equality Bulletin)
- Employees and members of the public have increased awareness of Prejudice & Discrimination reporting and know how to access interpretation and translation services when accessing council services.

#### Our Achievements

- As a result of the pandemic and inequalities exacerbated by the virus and lockdown measures, the council refreshed its priorities (including work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our communities) based on feedback from a community impact assessment carried out in summer 2020 and evidence from sources such as the council's Strategic Assessment
- Equality training is mandatory for all elected members and employees
- There are 11 elected member equality champions who have undertaken further training to support their colleagues with and to promote equality issues. Three of these elected member equality champions support the Aberdeenshire Licensing Boards. The elected member equality champions meet twice a year and support the promotion of the diversity calendar and its events such as raising a flag to mark LGBT History Month
- An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) online tool has been developed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act to evidence the due regard the council will pay in its decision-making process. The tool replaces the Equality Impact Assessment which had been in place for a number of years.
- Training on the IIA is being rolled out from spring 2021 with an online training module being developed
- The Equality and Human Rights Strategy Board agree an annual Diversity Calendar which is formed with key dates that the council will mark and raise awareness around. Our Diversity Calendar is being reviewed to consider whether there are better ways to celebrate diversity in Aberdeenshire
- Prejudice and Discrimination reporting continues under the reviewed approach
- Global Language Services (our interpretation and translation provider) have provided critical support for Council services and residents during the pandemic, including emergency support for schools and residents contacting the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub
- Our British Sign Language (BSL) users have been supported through the development and publication of BSL videos on our social media channels throughout the pandemic
- The Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priorities were reviewed in 2020. They are:
  - Changing Aberdeenshire's relationship with Alcohol
  - Reducing Poverty – previously Reducing Child Poverty
  - Connected and Cohesive Communities – a real focus on equality is provided through this group. Hubs have been established to provide support for groups across Aberdeenshire
  - Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) – new priority introduced in 2020 recognising the impact on all aspects of health (including mental health) as a result of the pandemic, and aligning to the Scottish priority of tackling obesity

Aberdeenshire's fifth [Children's Service Plan](#) for 2020-2023 was approved in December 2020. The Plan is based on requirements set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and built upon the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) philosophy. It and builds on progress and themes reflected in previous Plans and The Scottish Government's overall aim to 'safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people.'

The Plan sets out our shared vision, values and priorities over the next three years. The Plan and our strategic priorities have been developed considering, the views and experiences of children, young people, parents and carers, feedback from frontline workers and partner agencies.

Our approach places Children and Young People's Rights at the heart of everything that we do, and bases service planning and delivery in Aberdeenshire around Wellbeing, connecting it to the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Articles throughout

Our five strategic priorities are:

- Early Years
- Children & Young People's Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Children with a Disability
- Substance Misuse
- Corporate Parenting

Each priority is addressed by a multi-agency action plan. These include specific aims which detail how we are working in partnership to tackle this issue, and what action we are taking to make an impact on the lives of those children, young people, and families affected.

Our overall achievements include:

- The creation and embedding of a Children's Charter by Aberdeenshire's children and young people, for Aberdeenshire's children and young people.
- The delivery of the Aberdeenshire 'Year Young People 2018' Programme by our young people celebrating participation, engagement, children's rights and the successes and achievements of Aberdeenshire's children and young people.
- The development of wellbeing measures to help us identify what we are doing well and where services which support children and families require to be targeted.
- The PeterDeen programme developed to be inclusive and support an exceptional learning experience that supports discipline, teamwork and success in our young people won the SPFL (Scottish Professional Football League) Trust's Community Project of the Year Award
- We have strengthened and embedded an ambitious infrastructure for engagement with young people to inform planning and service delivery.
- A strong emphasis on family learning and nurture across Early Years Childcare provision contributing to family support.

## 13.2 Equality Outcome 2: To promote a better understanding of the needs of people of different race and develop strategies which support them

Our Aims

- Gypsy/Travellers will be accepted and welcomed by communities and experience reduced levels of prejudice and discrimination

- Communities will have an improved level of understanding of the needs of Gypsy/Travellers leading to more cohesive communities
- Increased number of Gypsy/Traveller sites in Aberdeenshire.
- Employees and member of the public have increased awareness of Prejudice & Discrimination reporting
- Improved awareness and access to interpretation and translation services in Aberdeenshire.
- Migrant workers are not discriminated against in the workplace
- Migrant workers are confident in reporting prejudice and discrimination incidents
- Migrant workers living in Aberdeenshire are not being prejudiced against by their landlords and are able to secure accommodation that meets their needs
- All migrant workers and newcomers into the area can access information to help ensure equal access to services.
- Migrant workers are integrated in the community.

#### Our Achievements

- Support in Education for Gypsy / Traveller Pupils - Resource boxes have been created for the Gypsy/Traveller communities – one at Aikey Brae, one at North Esk (Gypsy/Traveller sites), one at Kinellar Primary School and one additional box. These assist the children on the site to access educational resources. This approach has been received very well by residents and helps to keep children on the site in education.
- Digital support and e-learning is the focus for development and methods are being explored to enable Gypsy/Traveller pupils to access materials.
- Aberdeenshire New Scots' Refugee Integration Strategy. The 2019 – 2022 Integration Strategy focuses on how locally and nationally, we will improve our understanding and practice, to ensure we achieve successful and progressive life outcomes for new Scots in Aberdeenshire whilst continuously developing and improving our practice. The Aberdeenshire programme has been recognised by the Home Office, UNHCR and COSLA as an example of good and innovative practice and our organisational and planning framework is considered fit for practice and a recommended model for other local authorities.
- Foundation Apprenticeships – Syrian New Scots / Gypsy Traveller Students. Syrian New Scots were supported to undertake Foundation Apprenticeships - two Inverurie Academy students achieved the SciTech FA. Support provided included a translation service to deliver translated documents, translation service telephone discussions to investigate previous knowledge, understanding and skills to build on, support for online delivery/ understanding of course activities, and 1:1 support to complete SVQ units.
- ESOL Learners - Learning opportunities and progression routes were developed for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners including up to National 3 ESOL literacies. Funding was secured to develop and implement learning to address literacy needs in relation to employment and family finances to tackle child poverty. Over 85% of ESOL learners are achieving their learning goals and 125 learners have achieved

accreditation. Improved English skills enable adults to participate more effectively in everyday situations such as school, community life, and work

- English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service continues to support engagement and communication with families for whom English is an additional language.
- Education & Children's Services continue to review its written material to ensure that key information for parents is available in the most common languages spoken in Aberdeenshire. This applies to information about school meals, payments and other key information supporting children during their education journey
- Global Language Services (our interpretation and translation supplier) has provided critical services for our residents who have English as an additional language (EAL) throughout the pandemic, providing support to our schools and residents who have contacted the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub for support
- BSL videos have been developed to provide Covid-19 information to our BSL using residents. Our BSL plan is being constantly developed.
- Engage Aberdeenshire, the Council's new engagement platform, has the functionality to translate our consultations and surveys into different languages and to code results for analysis. This function has been used to capture the views of our EAL residents in Phase 2 of the Community Impact Assessment.

### 13.3 Equality Outcome 3: Develop a better understanding of the needs of people with a disability and develop and promote strategies which ensure access to council services and which support them in education and employment

#### Our Aims

- Disabled and older people can access services and believe their particular needs are met
- Communities and businesses understand the needs of older people and people with disabilities
- People with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, have improved employment prospects

#### Our Achievements

The development of guidance to support children and their families who transition from Children's to Adult Services in order to promote good practice and ensure the young person remains at the centre of the planning in order to continue to achieve improvements in the way we collaboratively support young people with particular wellbeing needs and in particular:

- Young people likely to have lifelong profound/complex needs often associated with a learning disability or diagnosed mental health disorder
  - Young people who may have Additional Support Needs (ASN)
  - Young people who may be at risk from harm
- Supporting children with a disability is a strategic priority in the council's [Children's Services Plan](#) 2020-2021. Actions are being delivered through the Community Planning Partnership

and progress is reported through the annual report taken to Education and Children's Services Committee.

- The work of the children with a Disability Thematic Subgroup has a focus on actively seeking, promoting and supporting high quality outcomes for children and young people with a disability in Aberdeenshire. In particular, the group has focused on the following three priorities:
  - Child Protection and Disability
  - Multi-agency Pathways and processes for Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)
  - Post-School Transitions for Young People with Disabilities
- The Wrap-Around Care Model is implemented in 6 of the 9 areas of Aberdeenshire. This has improved the range of support available to young people with complex needs in a safe environment.
- The number of children supported through a Self-Directed Support package has continued to grow, providing flexibility in the way in which families are empowered to access a range of support which meets individual need
- Development of a range of ALDO Online Learning and Development Modules including 'Understanding Sensory Behaviours (4 modules); Autism for Pupil Support Assistants and Health and Social Care courses on Autism'
- Strengthened our commitment to 'autism friendly schools' through the development of core training recommendations for school staff, and supporting teachers to undertake specialist training in Autism
- Children's Services to Adult Services Framework and Post-16 Transitions Framework
- Promotion of the use of the Autism Toolbox and the suite of guidance available for schools. These include support strategies for children and young people, supported by online learning and face-to-face training.
- Accessibility Strategy for schools published 2019.
- There are three Access panels in Aberdeenshire, which are independent voluntary organisations. The role of the Panel is to promote access to buildings, facilities and services. The council continues to provide a staff resource to support the operation of the panels.
- During 2020 the Council's Health & Wellbeing team has developed a number of online tools including podcasts and training supporting mental health at work and the council continues to have volunteer mental health first aiders available to support employees.
- Our web content accessibility continues to be monitored developed to support our partially sighted residents and ensure compliance with the Accessibility Regulations which came into force in 2020.

13.4 Equality Outcome 4: Develop a better understanding of the needs of LGBTI+ people as employees and customers, develop and cascade strategies which minimise bullying and harassment in schools and the community. Achieve measurably reduced levels of prejudice and discrimination against the LGBTI+ community.

Our Aims

- The LGBTI+ community, and those going through gender reassignment are more accepted in their communities, where their needs are understood
- Reduced levels of prejudice and discrimination towards the LGBTI+ community within the Aberdeenshire area
- Pupils and employees understand the needs of the LGBTI+ community in schools.
- Reduced incidences of bullying and harassment in schools linked to the LGBTI+ community
- Increased confidence in providing equality monitoring data

Our Achievements

- The Housing service has gained the LGBTI+ silver charter award, working with LGBTI+ Youth Scotland to raise awareness among staff and to address any perceived barriers to accessing homeless advice or assistance. The process also ensures that the journey for an LGBTI+ service user, from the initial access to Options and Homelessness service through to a final outcome, is a positive experience and users feel included, supported and comfortable when approaching the service. There is also increased staff awareness in addressing barriers.

13.5 Equality Outcome 5: Aberdeenshire Council's recruitment is implemented with fairness and transparency and fully supports people with Protected Characteristics

Our Aims

- Aberdeenshire Council is recognised as an employer of choice both internally and externally through effective implementation of recruitment and selection processes which are seen to be fair and transparent.
- The Council is recognised for recruiting from diverse communities resulting in a diverse workforce.
- There is greater diversity of males/females across non-traditional roles.
- The Gender Pay Gap for non-teaching employees is reduced

Our Achievements

- Policies in Practice (PiP) including recruitment training sessions commenced in November 2018, and 95 individuals involved with recruitment process have attended.
- In September 2020, an online course relating to reasonable adjustments throughout recruitment was launched. The course provides guidance and information



on considerations that should be taken into account by those involved in the recruiting process when implementing reasonable adjustments. So far approximately 60 members of the workforce have undertaken the training.

- An online guidance course 'Recruiting and Retaining People with Sensory Impairment or Deafness has been developed and is available for all employees and Elected Members
- The Resourcing Team has built upon images that portray gender balance across roles when promoting vacancies. For example, stock images of both male and female carers are used to promote vacancies in this field.

### 13.6 Equality Outcome 6: There will be a more inclusive culture whereby all employees understand and respect difference.

#### Our Aims

- Increased level of understanding of the needs of individuals with Protected Characteristics across all employees.
- Frontline services demonstrate an understanding of the needs of individuals with protected characteristics.
- Individuals and communities feel their views and rights are heard and respected and they feel empowered.
- Individuals feel supported and included in celebrating diversity and equality within their communities.
- Fewer reports of issues around poor verbal behaviour of some staff to some groups with protected characteristics

#### Our Achievements

- We have continued to promote equality and diversity throughout the pandemic through the use of social media channels, including remembering Holocaust Day and celebrating Black History month
- Launched our new Integrated Impact Assessment online toolkit
- Equality Champions and Elected Members Champions - there are around 40 Equalities Service Champions and 11 Elected Members Champions across the Council and Licensing Boards. Their role is to support services with equalities advice and advise on completing Integrated Impact Assessments.
- Our staff and Elected Members have access to Equalities and Respecting Diversity training on Aldo. Aldo training on completing an Integrated Impact Assessment will be uploaded during 2021
- Aberdeenshire's Children and Young People's Charter was co-produced with young people and endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council and the Community Planning Partnership Board. This has been used as a way to communicate about new Rights-reporting duties on public bodies with a range of information on the GIRFEC Website. Progress on this is reported in the Children's Services Plan annual report.

## 14 Part C: Developing Aberdeenshire Council Equality Outcomes 2021-25

### 14.1 What are Equality Outcomes

What are Equality Outcomes?

Equality Outcomes outline the improvements we are aiming to achieve through the equality actions outlined in this report. These changes may benefit individuals, groups, families, organisations or communities.

Specifically, an Equality Outcome should achieve one or more of the following:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

National guidance on setting equality outcomes notes that these should be proportionate and relevant to the strategic priorities of the organisations setting them. They may include both short-term and long term outcomes for people with protected characteristics.

Our Equality Outcomes have been developed as short to medium term (one to four years) and link with our local and national outcomes as outlined in the tables below.

Several of the equality outcomes link with already existing policies and strategies to further embed equality and drive efforts for improvement.

### 14.2 Consultation and Evidence Review

The development of Equality Outcomes was taken forward within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic to develop our shared understanding of its local impact. We reviewed the unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic then outlined our future priorities aligned to our recovery and renewal and national priorities.

We undertook a consultation exercise during February and March 2021. Due to the Covid restrictions in place at that time, physical events were simply not possible. We developed an online questionnaire to seek views from our communities and carried out community conversations with seldom heard groups to build upon previous discussion and consultation with equality groups. The outcome of the consultation can be found [here](#).

We considered the national policy context in the development of our equality outcomes to ensure robust and effective outcomes are set for the next four years.

Our equality outcomes are:

<b>Aberdeenshire Council Equality Outcomes 2021-25</b>	
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, particularly those who face barriers through disability and language, are provided with accessible information on services provided by the Council, and are supported to access these digitally where appropriate
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 and disabled children and young people. This should involve working closely with parents and carers.
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
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"> <li>• prevent hate crime before it happens</li> <li>• encourage people to report hate crime when it happens</li> <li>• improve service responses to victims</li> </ul>

<b>Equality Outcome 1</b>	<b>In Aberdeenshire, 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</b>
<b>Links to National Outcomes</b>	<p>We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society</p> <p>We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need</p> <p>Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs</p>
<b>Equality Outcome</b>	<p>More disabled people access public transport safely and in comfort with an integrated service that provides accessible information, appropriate assistance and support from transport employees</p> <p>Improve engagement with our services and enhance access to information for marginalised and underrepresented groups</p>
<b>Inequality Addressed</b>	<p>Disabled people experience difficulties accessing public transport because of safety, comfort, availability, connectivity, information and assistance, staff training and customer service</p> <p>Many groups such as those who use British Sign Language or whose main language is not English can struggle to effectively engage with Council services or within local communities</p>

<b>Context</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Duty</b>	<b>Lead Officer and Timescale</b>
The barriers in accessing transport are well documented and this can	The barriers facing disabled people and their needs are identified	Engagement with disabled people and organisations including third	Develop Framework	Disability	Eliminate Discrimination	Passenger Transport Manager

<p>be exacerbated in rural areas.</p> <p>Good access to affordable transport can support employment opportunities, contribute to better outcomes in relation to wellbeing and help tackle poverty</p>	<p>The changes, support and resources required are understood and agreed.</p> <p>Improvements in access to travel and passenger assistance.</p>	<p>sector organisations</p> <p>Engagement with transport providers</p> <p>Consultation about changes</p>				
<p>Joint commission of interpretation services for British Sign Language (BSL) services</p>	<p>Productive relationships with BSL user groups to continue to inform decision making.</p> <p>Creation of a BSL specific landing page on our website</p>	<p>Explore joint approach for the commissioning of BSL Interpretation.</p> <p>Work with the Council's Web</p> <p>Team and Sensory Impairment Team to create a BSL friendly</p>	<p>Joint commissioned services agreed with the partners.</p> <p>Increased engagement with BSL users.</p> <p>Webpage created.</p>	<p>Disability</p>	<p>Eliminate Discrimination</p> <p>Advance Equality of Opportunity</p> <p>Foster good Relations</p>	<p>Health &amp; Wellbeing and Strategic Policy Leader (Engagement &amp; Equalities)</p> <p>Web team</p>

		landing page on our website.	Monitor access and usage to the webpage			
Embed an inclusive approach to designing services	<p>All citizens can access services with ease</p> <p>Citizens and communities communicate with us in ways that work best for them</p>	<p>Ensure the service design process is inclusive providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups to be represented</p> <p>Promote the need for disadvantaged groups to be represented as service design is embedded across the council</p> <p>Directorates/ Services actively seek the involvement of disadvantaged groups in designing services</p>	<p>Increased engagement with disadvantaged groups in designing services</p> <p>Disadvantaged groups report increased satisfaction to accessing services</p>	All protected characteristics	<p>Eliminate Discrimination</p> <p>Advance Equality of Opportunity</p> <p>Foster good Relations</p>	<p>Business Change Manager</p> <p>Business Change Manager</p> <p>Service Managers</p>

<b>Equality Outcome 2</b>	<b>People in Aberdeenshire, particularly those who face barriers through literacy, language and digital exclusion, are provided with accessible information on services provided by the Council, and are supported to access these digitally where appropriate</b>
<b>Links to National Outcomes</b>	<p>We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society</p> <p>We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need</p> <p>Our public services are accessible, high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs</p>
<b>Equality Outcome</b>	More people with disabilities, older people and people with English as an additional language (EAL) access the information we provide about our services and appropriate assistance and support is provided with the confidence and skills to access our information digitally
<b>Inequality Addressed</b>	People with disabilities and EAL people experience difficulties accessing information about our services because of accessibility, information and assistance, staff training, customer service, lack of digital skills and lack of digital connectivity

<b>Context</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Duty</b>	<b>Lead Officer and Timescale</b>
The barriers in accessing information online can be exacerbated for disabled, older and EAL people	The barriers facing and their needs are identified – why is digital/information	Engagement with disabled people and EAL people including third sector organisations	Develop Framework	Disability, Race, Age	Eliminate Discrimination	Strategic Policy Lead (Engagement and Equalities)









































































