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To: Councillor Allard, Convener; Councillor Bouse, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Blake, Brooks, Davidson, Hutchison, Kuszniir, Macdonald and Mennie.

Town House,
ABERDEEN 3 June 2025

ANTI-POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMITTEE

The Members of the **ANTI-POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in **Committee Room 2 - Town House** on **WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE 2025 at 10.00 am.** **This is a hybrid meeting and Members may also attend remotely.**

The meeting will be webcast and a live stream can be viewed on the Council's website.
<https://aberdeen.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

ALAN THOMSON
INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER – GOVERNANCE

B U S I N E S S

DETERMINATION OF URGENT BUSINESS

- 1.1. There are no items of urgent business at this time

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

- 2.1. Determination of Exempt Business

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS OR TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

- 3.1. Members are requested to intimate any interests or connections

DEPUTATIONS

- 4.1. There are no requests for deputations at this time

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 5.1. Minute of previous meeting of 25 March 2025 (Pages 5 - 10)

COMMITTEE PLANNER

- 6.1. Committee Business Planner (Pages 11 - 14)

NOTICES OF MOTION

- 7.1. There are no Notices of Motion

REFERRALS FROM COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES

- 8.1. There are no referrals at this time

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- 9.1. Citizens' Assemblies Approach - Final Report on the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty - CORS/25/133
(Pages 15 - 158)
- 9.2. Supporting People with the Cost of Living Crisis 2024/25 – Full Year Evaluation - CORS/25/131 (Pages 159 - 178)
- 9.3. Working in Partnership for Aberdeen - Supporting people with the cost of living 2025/26 - CORS/25/132 (Pages 179 - 196)
- 9.4. Mapping of Aberdeen City Council Anti-Poverty and Inequality Services and Support - CORS/25/134 (Pages 197 - 218)
- 9.5. Draft Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028 - CORS/25/135 (Pages 219 - 240)

Integrated Impact Assessments related to reports on this agenda can be viewed [here](#)

To access the Service Updates for this Committee please click [here](#)

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ANTI-POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 25 March 2025. Minute of Meeting of the ANTI-POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Allard, Convener; Councillor Bouse, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Blake, Brooks, Davidson, Kuszniir, Macdonald, Mennie and van Sweeden (as substitute for Councillor Hutchison).

External Advisers:- Professor John Bone (University of Aberdeen), Kerry Gavin (CFINE), Sophy Green (Instant Neighbour), Donna Hutchison (Aberdeen Cyrenians), Dr Marjorie Johnston (NHS Grampian) and Edward Obi.

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be located [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

URGENT BUSINESS

1. There was no Urgent Business.

EXEMPT BUSINESS

2. There was no Exempt Business.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

3. Members were requested to intimate any Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements in respect of the items on the agenda.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that Councillor Macdonald advised that she was a member of Aberdeen Women's Alliance and GREC however, having applied the objective test she did not consider that her connections amounted to an interest which would prevent her from participating in the discussions;
- (ii) to note that Councillor Brooks advised that he was the emergency cover Chairman of the TLC Charity which was part of the Trussell Trust family of food banks however, having applied the objective test he did not consider that his connection amounted to an interest which would prevent him from participating in the discussions; and
- (iii) to note that Professor Bone advised that he was on the Board of CFINE however, having applied the objective test he did not consider that his connection amounted to an interest which would prevent him from participating in the discussions.

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MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 6 NOVEMBER 2024

4. The Committee had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 6 November 2024.

In respect of Article 8 (No Recourse to Public Funds), Members noted that additional information regarding this had been circulated as instructed.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

5. The Committee had before it the planner of committee business, as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the information provided; and
- (ii) to otherwise agree the Planner.

INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN - ANNUAL UPDATE - F&C/25/053

6. The Committee had before it a report outlining the work undertaken by the Children's Services Board during 2024/25 and incorporating the Local Child Poverty Action Report for 2024/25. The report outlined proposed changes to be made to the agreed Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan to support Community Planning Partners to positively respond to changes in published data and changed national policy intent.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:

- (a) note the progress made in delivering the Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Strategic Plan and associated work to address child poverty from April 2024 to date; and
- (b) comment on the report in advance of it being presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee for internal approval and thereafter Community Planning Aberdeen for full ratification.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct the Executive Director – Families and Communities, to circulate the ABZWorks commissioned Rocket Science study looking at barriers into employability for parents;
- (ii) to instruct the Executive Director – Families and Communities, to circulate an update in respect of the study period stated for reporting of breastfeeding;

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- (iii) to instruct the Executive Director – Families and Communities, to circulate details of the national Childminding Recruitment campaign;
- (iv) to instruct the Executive Director – Families and Communities, to follow up with the Asthma and Allergy Foundation as part of the further investigations in respect of the increasing local trend around hospitalisations due to asthma; and
- (v) to otherwise approve the recommendations.

EQUALITY OUTCOMES PROGRESS REPORT - CORS/25/042

7. The Committee had before it report updating on the progress made on the current set of Equality Outcomes from 2021-2025 and seeking approval for the proposed Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029 with the aim of mainstreaming Equality within the organisation and the city. The report also provided evidence of compliance with the duties as contained in the Equality Act 2010 and accompanying regulations.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:

- (a) note the progress on mainstreaming equality and the current set of Equality Outcomes as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (b) note the report findings from surveys and engagement with staff and with communities as contained in Appendix 2 and 3 of the report;
- (c) approve the draft Equality Outcomes for Aberdeen City Council for 2025 –2029 including:
 - Equality Outcomes as a Service Provider
 - Equality Outcomes for the Council as an Employer
 - Equality Outcomes as an Education Authority
 all detailed in the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2021 - 2025 as contained in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (d) note the progress report and proposed equality outcomes for the Licensing Authority pending approval by the Licensing Board;
- (e) note the Council's Employee information as contained in Appendix 4 of the report;
- (f) approve the Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025 and refreshed outcomes; and
- (g) instruct the Chief Officer - People and Citizens Services to publish the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report for 2021-2025 on the Council's website by April 2025 as per the statutory obligation.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the report findings from surveys and engagement with staff and with communities as contained in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (ii) to note that the full results of the Equality Outcomes Employee Experience Survey would be analysed then presented to the Staff Governance Committee in the first instance;

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- (iii) to instruct the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services, to issue a Service Update in respect of the outcomes and results of the Employee Experience Survey following its publication to the Staff Governance Committee;
- (iv) to note that the Equality Outcomes: Community Action Plan would be added to the committee business planner for September 2025; and
- (v) to otherwise approve the recommendations.

ACCESSING MONEY ADVICE AND ADVISORY SERVICES - CORS/25/052

8. The Committee had before it a report presenting the response to the recommendations set out in the Accessing Advice Services Report CORS/24/149 from 12 June 2024 which instructed a further report to consider with partners the provisions of other advisory services in the city.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:

- (a) approve the proposed improvement actions; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to report back on progress within 12 months.

The Committee had before it an amendment from Councillor Blake:-

that the Committee -

- (1) agrees the proposed improvement actions with the following additions:
- (2) notes the response rate to the survey. Though there were overall 560 respondents, for virtually all questions more than two thirds of respondents gave no answer;
- (3) instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to work with the Chief Officer - Data Insights to improve the response and enhance the insights for the next survey;
- (4) notes that the report highlights that lack of awareness is a key issue with over two thirds of respondents unaware of the services. The committee notes the actions proposed to raise awareness, but also noting the concerns about digital exclusion;
- (5) instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to speak to service users about how they receive information and sources they trust and to report back to committee via a service update; and
- (6) instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Service to report back on progress within 12 months.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the proposed improvement actions;
- (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services, to report back on progress within 12 months;
- (iii) to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services, to work with Chief Officer - Data Insights to improve the response and enhance the insights for the next survey; and

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- (iv) to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services, to speak to service users accessing the Council's money advice services about how they received information and sources they trusted and to report back to committee via a service update.

UPDATE REPORT ON THE VISIT TO ABERNECESSITIES ON 29 JANUARY 2025 - CORS/25/054

9. The Committee had before it an update report following the visit to AberNecessities on 29 January 2025.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee:

- (a) note the report and actions identified during the visit to AberNecessities and work done to date; and
- (b) thank all those at AberNecessities, including the staff and volunteers, who welcomed the Committee and provided an informative and interesting visit.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct the Community Planning Manager to work with the Public Health External Adviser to produce a service update in respect of developments taking place at a national level on the issue of infant formula;
- (ii) to instruct the Community Planning Manager to provide further information on the location of washing machines and tumble driers within the Council's communal housing stock; and
- (iii) to otherwise approve the recommendations.

- **COUNCILLOR CHRISTIAN ALLARD, Convener.**

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	ANTI-POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER The Business Planner details the reports which have been instructed as well as reports which the Functions expect to be submitting for the calendar year.								
2	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Director	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
3	11 June 2025								
4	Citizens' Assemblies Approach - Final Report on the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty - CORS/25/133	To present the findings and recommendations of the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty in Aberdeen.	On the agenda	Michelle Crombie/ Deirdre Nicolson	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.1, 3.1		
5	Supporting People with the Cost of Living Crisis 2024/25 – Full Year Evaluation - CORS/25/131	To present a full year evaluation of the outcomes achieved from the Cost of Living Funding allocated for 2024/25.	On the agenda	Michelle Crombie	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.1, 3.1		
6	Working in Partnership for Aberdeen - Supporting people with the cost of living 2025/26 - CORS/25/132	To seek approval for the allocation of the £1million provided by Council to support people with the cost of living during 2025/26.	On the agenda	Michelle Crombie	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.1, 3.1		
7	Mapping of Aberdeen City Council Anti-Poverty and Inequality Services and Support - CORS/25/134	To present a high level overview of anti-poverty and inequality services and supports being delivered by the Council, and in partnership with public services, third sector and community organisations across Aberdeen.	On the agenda	Michelle Crombie/ Deirdre Nicolson	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.1, 3.1		
8	Draft Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028 - CORS/25/135	To present the Regional Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028.	On the agenda	Martin Barry, Engagement Partner, Scottish Enterprise	Isla Newcombe	Corporate Services	1.1, 3.1		
9	10 September 2025								
10	Committee Visit - Fountain of Love Church								
11	26 November 2025								

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Director	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2									
12	Citizens' Assemblies Approach - Aberdeen City Council Response to the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty	To present the Council's response to the findings and recommendations of the SWBG study on gender inequality and poverty, including details of completed and proposed actions.		Michelle Crombie/ Deirdre Nicolson	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.2		
13	Fairer Aberdeen Fund Annual Report	To provide members with the Fairer Aberdeen Fund annual report for 2024/25		Susan Thoms	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.14		
14	Equality Outcomes: Community Action Plan CORS/25/108	To present the Equality Outcomes: Community Action Plan.	On 25 March 2025 Members agreed to add the Plan to the committee business planner for September 2025 - however, due to 10 September 2025 being set aside for a committee visit, the report will be taken in November 2025.	Baldeep McGarry	People and Citizen Services	Corporate Services			
15	2026 and beyond and TBC								
16	Citizens' Assemblies Approach - Evaluation of the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty	To present an evaluation of the Citizen's Assemblies Approach which will include feedback from steering group members as well as the people and community groups engaged in the process.	January 2026	Michelle Crombie/ Deirdre Nicolson	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.2		
17	Memorandum of Understanding between Aberdeen City Council and the Department of Work and Pensions on preventing homelessness and improving outcomes	Six monthly update: At the Council meeting on 13 July 2022 the Council resolved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); to agree that the Co-Leaders of the Council countersign the MoU on behalf of the Council. Last update 20 March 2024.		Jacqui McKenzie	Housing	Corporate Services	2.3		
18	Refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026	To present the refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2016-26 approved by the Community Planning Aberdeen (CPA) Board on 29 April 2024 - On 21 June 2023 Members agreed: 5(b) to instruct the Chief Officer Early - Intervention and Community Empowerment, to liaise with the Chief Officer - Data and Insights, and align the Committee business planner with key Community Planning Aberdeen deliverables.	2026	Michelle Crombie	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.1, 1.5 and 1.10		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Director	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2									
19	Refreshed Locality Plans 2021-26: North, South and Central.	To present the Locality Plans approved by the CPA Board.	2026	Michelle Crombie	Community Planning	Corporate Services	1.1, 1.5 and 1.10		
20	Accessing Money Advice and Advisory Services	25 March 2025: Members agreed: to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Service to report back on progress within 12 months;	March 2026	Angela Kazmierczak	People and Citizen Services	Corporate Services	1.1, 3.2		
21	Integrated Children's Services Plan - Annual Update	On 20 March 2024, Committee resolved to agree in future years that the Plan would be presented to the Anti Poverty and Inequality Committee for its input in advance of being presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee for formal approval. Last presented 25 March 2025.	March 2026	Eleanor Sheppard	Education and Lifelong Learning	Families and Communities	1.1		
22	Equality Outcomes Progress Report 2025 - 2029	To provide an update on the progress achieved for Aberdeen City Council's Equality Outcomes for 2025-27. Reported to Committee on 25 March 2025.	March 2027	Baldeep McGarry	People and Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.2		

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	11 June 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Citizens' Assemblies Approach - Final Report on the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/133
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Michelle Crombie, Strategic Lead. Prevention and Community Empowerment
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 3.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty in Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the findings of the final report on the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty in Aberdeen;
- 2.2 Thanks all those that participated in this project;
- 2.3 Instructs the Executive Director of Corporate Services to bring a response to the findings and recommendations of the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty to the Committee meeting on 26 November 2025;
- 2.4 Instructs the Executive Director of Corporate Services to share the report and recommendations for action with Scottish Government, UK Government. Police Scotland and Financial Services Ombudsman; and
- 2.5 Instructs the Executive Director of Corporate Services to bring an evaluation report on the process to the Committee meeting in January 2026.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Following the decision at the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee on 12 June 2024, the Scottish Women's Budget Group was commissioned, in accordance with the Council's procurement regulations, to deliver a citizen's assembly approach on poverty and gender inequality in Aberdeen.
- 3.2 Appendix 1 contains an executive summary of the work undertaken and the key findings.

- 3.3 Appendix 2 contains a comprehensive report which sets out how women's everyday experiences in Aberdeen are affected by gender inequality and what can be done to tackle the systemic barriers which are built into systems to make life fairer for women in Aberdeen.
- 3.4 The report presents 116 recommendations across four themes:
- Care and Caring (Childcare and unpaid care)
 - Safety (Violence against women/ community safety)
 - Welfare/ Benefits
 - Health and Wellbeing (Accessing support and health)
- 3.5 Page 100 of the report in Appendix 2 lists the 116 recommendations made; 96 are to the Council and the other 19 are to the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, Scottish and UK Government, Police Scotland and Financial Services Ombudsman. These are also listed in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.11 below.

3.6 Recommendations for Aberdeen City Council

To Continue:

1. to support third sector childcare providers with more affordable rents/ concessionary models
2. to build on the success of the flexible childcare model being implemented at Cummings Park Nursery and Tillydrone Nursery.
3. to monitor the cost of the school day on a regular basis to identify how families can be supported with this.
4. to provide upfront support with childcare costs to families.
5. to use housing benefit/council tax reduction data to ensure households who may be entitled to Pension Credit are aware of this.

To Consider:

6. how business support grants could be used to encourage people into childminding.
7. ensuring employees who are kinship carers can access paid leave and flexible working to support a child/young person moving into their care.
8. extending free travel to parents of children who need accompanied to school on public transport.
9. funding a community navigator role (as piloted by Glasgow Disability Alliance).
10. how it communicates with its citizens about Council Tax and what it funds, including this as part of budget consultation.
11. how they advertise the Scottish Welfare Fund to ethnic minority groups.
12. how access to their site for Gypsy/Travellers can be improved for non-drivers.
13. using LEZ funds to support a taxi card or dial a bus service.

To Do:

Care and Caring

14. run a campaign highlighting the benefits of flexible working to employers and review its own provision

15. ensure health visitors are aware of and able to refer families for Eligible 2 childcare
16. provide alternative booking options beyond online, i.e. in-person/ by telephone
17. undertake a mapping of childcare provision for disabled children (0-18) across the City to identify any gaps and develop a plan for addressing these gaps.
18. provide clear accessible information about the childcare support available for families with disabled children.
19. develop early intervention approaches to address school refusal linked to mental health issues.
20. extend the eligibility criteria for 2-year-old funded ELC to second and subsequent children born as part of a multiple birth event.
21. analyse its data on the provision of school age childcare to ensure provision is supporting kinship care families.
22. undertake a cost/benefit analysis of paying the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster and kinship carers versus paying an increased rate.
23. ensure all frontline practitioners are supported to be able to address financial circumstances with families involved in the care system.
24. use discretionary housing benefit to help birth parents to maintain their tenancy.
25. ensure frontline professionals consider the costs of putting contact arrangements in place for birth parents to ensure they are manageable.
26. carry out an analysis of Pupil Equity Funding to understand how this has been used to reduce the cost of the school day.
27. ensure all schools operate a pre-loved scheme to encourage the reuse of school uniform to support low-income families and reduce waste
28. ensure all schools maximise uptake of School Clothing Grants and Free School Meals by providing information on a yearly basis.
29. explore placing financial inclusion workers in associated school groups to ensure that families have access to support in a way that reduces stigma.
30. remove the need for someone to provide a mobile number as well as an email address from the free school meal/school clothing grant application.
31. identify what data is collected which could help identify groups/individuals who are entitled to the School Clothing Grant and who have not applied for it.

Unpaid Care

32. allocate sufficient funding to ensure the provision of support to carers as outlined in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.
33. ensure its non-residential social care charging policy and financial assessment adequately takes into account disability related expenditure.
34. analyse how non-residential social care charges impact on child poverty levels in the City.

Safety

35. ensure that applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund from survivors of domestic abuse consider the additional costs these households face.
36. adopt a feminist urban planning approach, as being developed in Edinburgh and Glasgow and used in other European Cities such as Vienna and Barcelona.

37. embed safety audits/walks of areas being redeveloped or those identified as high risk to improve access/accessibility.
38. invest in community-based youth work as a preventative measure to fight anti-social behaviour.
39. undertake work to ensure teachers and youth workers feel able to address issues associated with the manosphere, porn etc.
40. encourage schools to consider toilet provision particularly for younger year groups to address feelings of safety.

Welfare/ Benefits

41. publish Pay Gap data disaggregated for teaching and non-teaching staff.
42. publish disaggregated employee data by job type, pay grade, work pattern.
43. carry out an analysis of the eligibility criteria it uses for all grants it provides to understand who this is helping and impact of conditionality requirements, Living Wage and DWP etc
44. gather data on how many of its citizens experience the challenges posed by the UK's 'hostile environment' and lobby the UK Government to tackle the issues.
45. have easy-to-understand information about entitlement to benefits/support available, including translation into main minority languages.
46. make the formula used by the DWP to calculate Universal Credit available to help those with variable incomes.
47. ensure all staff dealing with income maximisation have undertaken Fife Gingerbreads Confident Conversations training.
48. ensure questions about child maintenance are asked as standard as part of conversations about income maximisation.
49. further analyse Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) data to explore how different characteristics impact on the outcome of applications.
50. provide households with the option to pay council tax over 12 months instead of 10.
51. provide clearer information online about who is entitled to council tax reduction.
52. run a campaign to encourage take up of single person council tax reduction.
53. make information on circumstances in which they would backdate claims for Council Tax reduction readily available.
54. ensure information about reductions for disabled households is accessible and relevant professionals are able to provide this information to relevant households.
55. analyse data on council tax arrears to understand which households are being affected by its current practices.
56. carry out a cost benefit analysis of debt recovery practices and its use of private debt recovery companies.
57. develop debt recovery policies that prevent victims of abuse coerced debt.
58. pilot a community diner project as developed by Nourish Scotland.
59. use the development of the local Good Food Nation plan to tackle food poverty and builds gender analysis into the policy development.
60. carry out a scoping exercise to see if it's possible to build on the allotment market stall and the Cfine box scheme to improve access to quality fresh food.
61. ensure that provision of period products meets the needs of women with heavy menstrual bleeding.

Health and Wellbeing

62. ensure Council digital systems can be accessed easily by using smart phones.
63. work with a group of citizens to ensure the website is fully accessible and user friendly and that key information is translated into key minority languages.
64. promote the availability of social tariffs for Broadband to low-income households.
65. embed citizen participation in service design processes using a trauma informed and gender lens.
66. ensure there are clear non-digital options for people to access support at community level and embed a no-wrong door approach to their services.
67. analyse housing and homelessness data with a gender lens and consider the need for larger properties in its plans to address the Housing Emergency.
68. ensure that the action plan to deal with the housing emergency takes a gendered lens to developing solutions to this issue.
69. increase the supply of affordable/social housing.
70. provide clearer information about eligibility criteria for Scottish Welfare Fund.
71. speed up plans to retrofit properties to energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.
72. ensure clear up to date information about support available to migrant women and their families in an easily understandable format.
73. provide clear guidance to its staff about what support is available including financial help for migrant women.
74. ensure staff have appropriate training on domestic abuse, risk and no recourse to public funds.
75. extend the contents insurance cover provided to Council tenants to families staying on the Gypsy/Travellers site.
76. monitor the time taken to deal with repairs on the Gypsy/Travellers site and report on this separately from repairs to general housing stock.
77. investigate the viability of replicating the approach taken by Manchester and Highland Council which has seen buses taken back under public control.
78. run a safety survey to identify high priority areas for improvements to support women and other disadvantaged groups' ability to access public transport.
79. review the area covered by the LEZ to identify if changes to this are required to make the bus and train stations more accessible.
80. analyse exemption data to identify any groups who have been impacted by the introduction of the LEZ and what support they may require to become LEZ compliant.
81. A final overarching recommendation is for Aberdeen City Council to ensure those in decision making roles clearly understand that the way in which money is raised and spent is not a gender-neutral process.

To review and publish findings:

82. review the provision of free holiday activities and analyse data to understand how provision helps prevent child poverty.
83. monitor who accesses discounted school aged childcare to understand who is benefitting from this and how the criteria used helps prevent child poverty.

84. review the criteria for accessing discounted school aged care ensuring it is accessible to single parents who receive the Real Living Wage.
85. review the provision of before and after school provision and work with schools and community and learning centres to identify possible solutions to address gaps.
86. review transition arrangements and support between P7 and S1 to identify improvements needed to keep young people engaged in education at this key point.
87. review data to identify the characteristics of, and areas where, kinship carers reside to help understand the wider support needs families may have related to low income.
88. review the eligibility criteria for all child related benefits in light of rises in the Real Living Wage and DWP conditionality rules, considering a taper to support families just above the threshold.
89. review the process for renewing Blue Badges and bus passes, to reduce the evidence requirements and speed up the time taken.
90. review the criteria for those able to access a Blue Badge to ensure it meets the needs of those with neurological conditions (such as dementia) as well as mobility issues.
91. review the cost of temporary accommodation for women with experience of domestic abuse who are in work and do not qualify for housing benefit.
92. review the placement of taxi-ranks.
93. review its job evaluation scheme to identify if there are any biases built into this which results in women being in lower paid roles.
94. review its practice around council tax arrears, charges and repayment plans for those who fall behind for the current council tax year.
95. review the threshold for income-based support to understand the costs/benefits of keeping these the same or amending them.
96. review its performance for housing repairs to drive improvements

3.7 Recommendations for Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership

97. use data to identify areas with high levels of unmet need in relation to social care and work with communities to develop responses to support families.
98. ensure the Annual Performance Report provide details of support for carers and other information in relation to the implementation of the Carers Act.
99. pilot the provision of support to girls and their families who hit puberty early.
100. Work with local authorities and health boards to improve outcomes for women in light of increasing rates of economic inactivity due to poor health.

3.8 Recommendations for Scottish Government

101. increase the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster and kinship carers which was set in 2023.
102. ensure there is an appropriate level of legal aid provision in Aberdeen.
103. review the Framework agreement for goods supplied via the Scottish Welfare Fund to ensure quality of goods provided is considered
104. review the Scottish Welfare Fund guidance provided to local authorities using a gendered lens.
105. conduct a revaluation of properties across Scotland as a step towards to the replacement of council tax and explore alternative local taxation.

- 106. ensure there is availability of Legal Aid solicitors to support women with No Recourse to Public Funds to deal with immigration and civil law cases
- 107. pilot bus fares cap in Aberdeen.

3.9 Recommendations for UK Government

- 108. UK Government to bring work capability rules for kinship carers in line with those for foster carers.
- 109. DWP to take into account the requirements for engagement with statutory organisations when children are removed in the conditionality rules placed on parents.
- 110. DWP to ensure they are not calling people who are in work (but who are seen to be underemployed) to meetings during the days/hours they work.
- 111. Westminster Government to ensure Universal Credit provides enough income to cover essential expenditure.
- 112. UK Government to unfreeze Local Housing Allowance.
- 113. UK Government to urgently ensure social tariffs are available to low-income households.
- 114. UK Government to nationalise energy distribution and review how the energy markets work to ensure more equitable charges.

3.10 Recommendations for Police Scotland

- 115. Police Scotland to work with Aberdeen City Council to increase the number of community police across the city to build trust within the community, address issues, and promote safety.

3.11 Recommendations for Financial Services Ombudsman

- 116. Financial Service Ombudsman to investigate the practices of insurance companies in relation to the Gypsy/Traveller Community.

3.12 Next Steps

- 3.12.1 Council officers will carefully consider and work across services and with Police Scotland and the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership to prepare a response to all of the recommendations made by the Scottish Women's Budget Group. The response will include details of completed and any proposed actions and will be reported to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee on 26 November 2025.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Citizens' Assemblies approach study on poverty and gender inequality in Aberdeen was undertaken within the £50,000 financial allocation approved by Council at the meeting on 1 March 2023, leaving a balance of £0. This includes the evaluation report which will be submitted to the Committee in January 2026.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Scottish Women's Budget Group was commissioned in accordance with the Council's Procurement Regulations.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Not responding to or implementing the recommendations within the final report.	Council officers will carefully consider all of the recommendations within the report to determine what actions can be taken to fully or partially meet the recommendation and where this is not the case, provide a full explanation as well as any proposed alternative recommendation.	L	Yes
Compliance	Failing to comply with procurement law	Compliance with the Council's Procurement Regulations	L	Yes
Operational	Insufficient resources to implement the recommendations within the final report.	Council officers will be asked to consider the resource requirements associated with implementing the recommendations of the report to ensure a proportionate response to the likely outcome.	L	Yes
Financial	Insufficient funding to cover the costs of implementing the recommendations within the final report.	Council officers will be asked to consider the financial requirements associated with implementing the recommendations of the report to ensure a proportionate response to the likely outcome.	L	Yes
Reputational	Not responding to or implementing the	Participants have been advised that the assembly approach is	L	Yes

	recommendations within the final report.	advisory, but there is a commitment to feedback to participants the consideration of their recommendations.		
Environment / Climate	No environmental risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement within the context of tackling poverty:-</p> <p>A Transparent, Accessible and Accountable Council</p> <p>Aberdeen City Council works for the people of Aberdeen, and it is important that people can access, understand, and take part in the Council's democratic processes. To make Aberdeen City Council more transparent, accessible, and accountable we will</p> <p>'Explore options to establish local Citizens' Assemblies – with the first remit of a Citizens' Assembly being to advise the council on what's needed to tackle gender inequality in Aberdeen'</p>
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>Stretch outcome 1: 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 2: 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>Stretch outcome 3: 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026</p> <p>Stretch outcome 5: Care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 6: 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p>

	<p>Stretch outcome 8: 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 9: 10% fewer adults (over 18) charged with more than one offence by 2026</p> <p>Stretch outcome 12: Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring with a longer term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate</p>
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer People and Citizens Services on 15 May 2025.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Citizen Assemblies 12 June 2024.pdf](#)

[Citizen Assemblies 11 January 2023.pdf](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Executive Summary

Appendix 2 Aberdeen Gender Inequality and Poverty Report 2025

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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**Scottish
Women's
Budget
Group**

Aberdeen Gender

Inequality and Poverty

Report

Executive Summary

2025

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Executive Summary

The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) were commissioned by Aberdeen City Council's Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee to explore the impact of poverty and gender inequality on women and their families in Aberdeen and identify with participants solutions that could address these issues for individuals, families and the wider community.



You know, women, if we're broken, then so is society and so are the communities, because if we're broken, who's going to keep the backbone of the community going

Focus Group Participant

The full report sets out how women's everyday experiences in Aberdeen are affected by gender inequality and what can be done to tackle the systemic barriers which are built into our systems to make life fairer for women in Aberdeen.

Women's poverty and inequality are deeply rooted in systemic and structural issues, requiring solutions that address societal norms and economic structures to achieve gender equality. Women's caring responsibilities often impact on their involvement in the labour market. This results in economic inequality which reduces women's financial independence, restricting their life choices.

Recognising that women and men experience the world differently and face different economic realities and challenges is hugely important if we are to tackle these deep-rooted issues. Women's experiences of inequality are further complicated by intersecting factors, such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status, which can lead to multiple forms of discrimination.

To overcome these issues, and as set out in the recommendations of the full report, it's vital that there is an understanding that the way services are delivered, how budgets are set and used, and how systems interact with each other can either exacerbate or address inequality. How the council collects and uses data to understand how their policies are impacting on its citizens and how implementation is achieving its priorities needs to be at the heart of how it does business. There needs to be a move away from talking about people to understanding different people's needs. Better use of disaggregated data can only help elected members and officers to prioritise limited resources.

Increasing transparency and improving communication is fundamental. Ensuring participation and truly working in partnership with communities (both geographical and of interests) is central to achieving the transformational change needed to address gender inequality and inequality more widely.

It is essential that Aberdeen City Council take a gendered lens to service design and budget setting while using sex disaggregated data to monitor the impact of their decisions, if they want to achieve a more gender equal city particularly in these difficult financial times.

An overarching recommendation from this project is for Aberdeen City Council to ensure those in decision making roles clearly understand that the way in which money is raised and spent is not a gender-neutral process. Any decisions taken at the Council level can drive work forward to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and poverty or make life harder for women and other disadvantaged groups.

As part of this project, the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee have committed to providing a response to those who participated within 6 months of them considering the contents of this report.

Process

The project took a mixed methods approach, using the principles of a citizens assembly combined with a gender budgeting approach to guide the research. A local steering group of **9** women from a wide range of backgrounds supported the development, focus, analysis and solutions identified in this report.

Key principles included:

Participative: the challenges and the solutions were identified by the community;

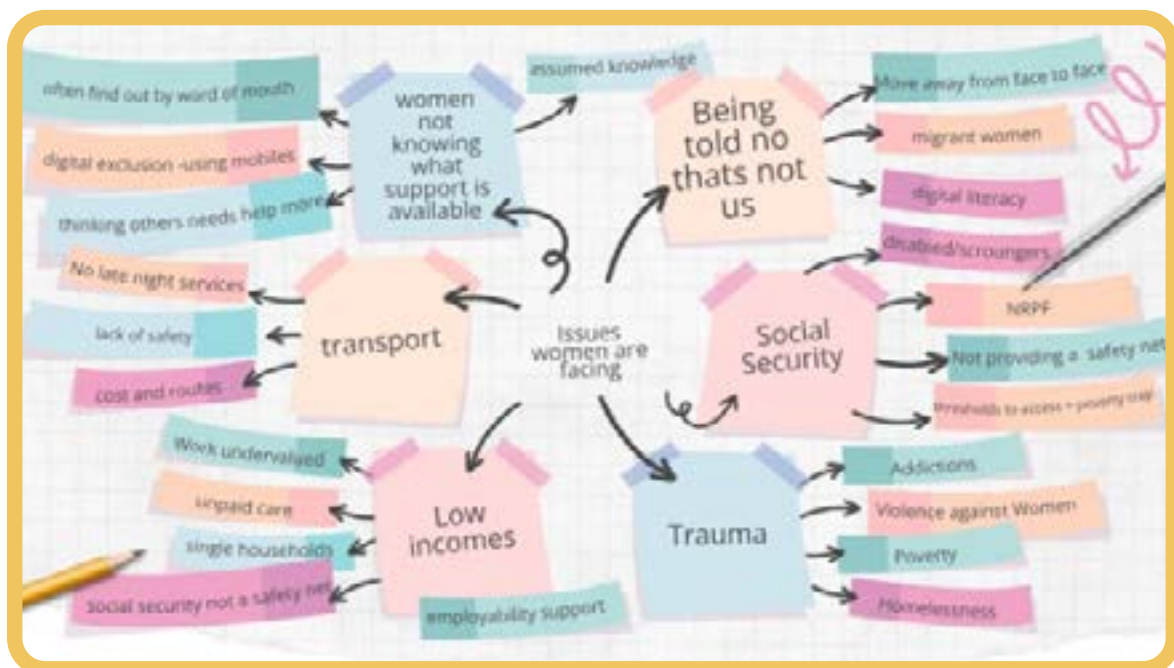
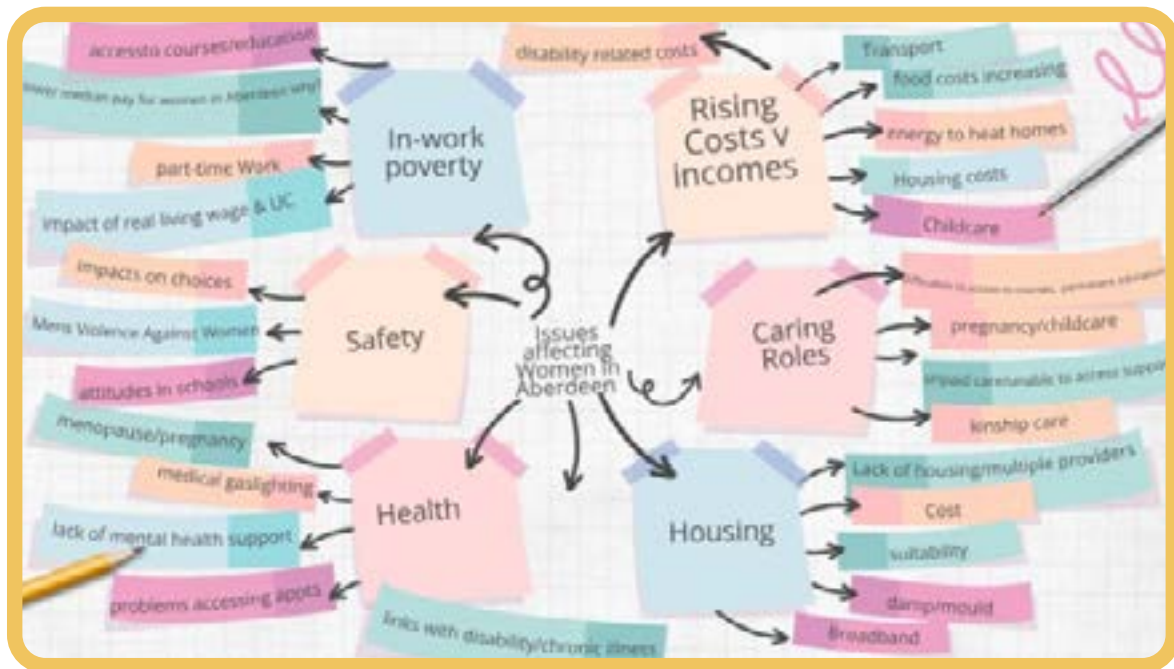
Intersectional: ensuring we involved and heard from a diverse range of people;

Informed: the steering group were supported to build on their experiences and understanding.

The mixed methods approach enabled us to hear from those who have experience of living on a low income, those who work in organisations that provide support, as well as those who have experience of both.

Overview from the Steering Group

The steering group worked to identify the issues that were affecting women in Aberdeen thinking about their own experiences and those of their family, friends and wider community. The following illustrations highlight the areas identified:



Many of the challenges identified highlight interlinked structural barriers that women face because the different needs of men and women are not recognised within decision making at a local or national level. These systemic barriers need to be addressed

at a societal level as opposed to being left to individual women to address. Caring responsibilities, social security, work, transport, health and housing were all highlighted as significant issues for women in Aberdeen that impacted on the choices and options available to them. This means a gendered lens needs to be taken to decisions around how services are delivered, whether these are new services or about the delivery of services currently provided. As highlighted in the following example:

Women who experience domestic abuse often lack the finances to leave an abusive partner or seek support. They do not have the resources to take expensive buses, or the time to spend over an hour to reach services without exposing themselves to increased risk. They might not have access to a phone or computer to be able to use online/phone based services and they cannot take the chance of losing any support systems they have by having to move for housing.

The steering group spent time considering how the way services are currently delivered can create unintended barriers to women (and other groups) while trying to get the support they need. They felt that:

- Siloed approaches taken by the public sector often meant people did not get the help they needed as agencies often only deal with one thing;
- ‘Gatekeeping’ stops people being able to speak with the individuals they need to;
- If people’s situation is complex, the digital support service which people are being pushed to use cannot cope because this does not follow the flowchart that has been developed in a service design process;
- People often do not know who can help or what support they are entitled to, there are a lot of assumptions made about people knowing who can help.



Findings

The cost of living and how its impacting survey respondents

“

The prices of things are too high. I am exhausted from working so much and not able to afford all meals in a day.

Across this project the majority of people stated that compared to this time last year they felt financially worse off. This amounted to **65%** respondents. This was due to costs rising faster than wages/benefits and people not having an opportunity to increase their incomes.

About a third of respondents stated they were struggling to manage everyday household expenditure (see table 1 for a breakdown). This increased for single parents, disabled, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and single households and decreased for male respondents (the men who took the survey tended to have higher incomes, were more likely to work full time and in the private sector. They were less likely to be disabled and there were no single parents).

Care and Caring

“

I cannot work as childcare before and after school is expensive and there is no availability.

The hours women work are often dependent on the number and ages of their children and their access to affordable childcare. The disproportionate responsibility for childcare constrains women's employment opportunities and their income which has lifelong impacts.

40% of women who have childcare responsibilities felt that childcare had impacted on the hours of paid work they can do, while **25%** said it impacted on the type of paid work they can do. For BME women (where there is often little extended family support) this increased to **64%** and **29%**. While nearly half of all single parents stated that managing childcare had impacted their financial wellbeing.

The average cost for childcare for children under 3 is over **£14,000** per year. Over **50%** of those with childcare costs (for all age groups) said they struggled to manage childcare costs while **34%** had to make changes to other areas of household spending to be able to afford their childcare costs.

Aberdeen has seen a decrease of **23.6%** in the number of childcare providers between June 2017 and June 2024. This figure was **33.7%** for childminders.¹ The lack of accessible/flexible childcare meant that women have had to turn down work or give up work which involved non-9-5 hours.

The Steering Group mapped the provision of ELC funded childcare, breakfast clubs and school aged childcare and private nurseries and childminders from the information available on the Aberdeen City Council website. The mapping exercise shows there a number of areas of Aberdeen where there is little or no provision. This often places an additional burden on women to get to childcare in other areas of the city, this can be compounded if they rely on public transport.

Women reported that even where there was childcare provided in their area, this could be oversubscribed making it difficult to get their children in. While the provision of school aged childcare is not a statutory responsibility there is a duty to provide this for children in need. Without access to these services women are often restricted to jobs which are available during school hours (which are often in lower paid sectors). This is particularly the case for single parents, parents of disabled children and migrant women.

Kinship Care

“

I wanted to keep him in his school with his friends, it was important that we did that, but I don't drive and it was impossible to keep working and keep him there, I couldn't get any help with childcare and my employer wouldn't change my hours.

Kinship carers and families are often faced with a very sudden change of circumstances and responsibilities as a result of a family crisis. While they may have a pre-existing relationship with the child(ren) this does not mean the support needs of the child and the carer are less than for children who go into foster care. The kinship carers we engaged with during this research stated that they often felt that their support needs were not fully recognised, including the financial impact that these caring arrangements had on them.

Cost of the School Day

“

I lost access to the school clothing grant for my 3 kids as a I work in social care and my wage went up, when I asked about it I got told to find a job that paid me 18p an hour less or reduce my hours.

Mums highlighted how the costs associated with children in school impacted on them and their families' finances. These included:

- Cost of public transport to get children to school (adult day ticket at the time of the data collection was **£5.30** a day);
- Cost of school uniforms;
- Cost of school trips/activities and lack of access to grants to support this if women are working.

According to CPAG, parents across the UK typically need to find at least **£39** per week for a child's secondary school education, and **£19** for a primary-aged child.ⁱⁱ

The school clothing grant is a cliff edge benefit, which means the minute people earn a penny over the threshold they lose all access to this. This has a major impact on families who are still on a low income, particularly within the context of the current cost of living crisis.



Unpaid care

Similarly to childcare, caring for other family members impact on women's ability to take paid work or to increase their working hours. Survey respondents stated:

- **26%** said that caring impacted on the paid work they can do;
- **48%** that it has affected their physical health;
- **57%** that it has affected their mental health;
- **39%** it has affected their financial wellbeing.

“

Between 2015 and 2019 I had to provide more intense care to my adult daughter, which meant that I could not work many hours, which really impacted my ability to keep my career going - ended up having to take low paid precarious jobs. I've not really fully recovered my mental health, life feels really precarious

Only **9%** of survey respondents cared for someone who received formal social care support. Respondents stated they had been seeking help and had been told that their individual care needs were not serious enough. This means that family members are taking on additional caring responsibilities which can have an impact on the person providing the care. It can also be difficult for the person being cared for (for example, if this changes relationships and family dynamics).

Safety

The steering group were clear that domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment at work, in schools and public spaces reinforced gender inequality by limiting women and girls access to education, employment, and other opportunities. Gender inequality therefore sets the underlying context for violence against women.

In Aberdeen in 23/24 Police Scotland recorded **110** incidents of domestic abuse per **10,000** population (slightly below the Scottish average). Over four-in-five incidents (**81%**) of domestic abuse in 2023/24 had a female victim and a male suspected perpetrator.ⁱⁱⁱ

Women often experience safety differently than men, with studies showing women feel less safe when using public spaces. Women and girls are socialized from a young age to be fearful in public spaces, leading them to understand that by presenting as female in public space, they are vulnerable to male aggression. As a result, women often engage in unseen 'safety work'. Other minoritised groups such as members of the LGBT+ community, those from BME communities and disabled people can also have differing feelings of safety.

39% of all survey respondents said they felt very safe, this reduced for members of the LGBT community at **18%** and was higher for men at **54%**.

“

The streets are so dark I don't feel safe outside at night

Poor street lighting was identified as one of the key issues affecting women and girls feelings of safety, impacting on whether they go out at night and/or how they travel. Not feeling safe getting to and from bus stops is a major barrier to women seeing public transport as a realistic option. Women were clear that the new LED lighting being used across the city did not provide a level of illumination which helped them to feel safe.

Women highlighted that despite areas of the city being redeveloped, the differing safety perspectives of women did not appear to have been taken into account during the design or the redevelopment phase. For example, Union Terrace (lack of lighting at night), Union Street and the Beach Boulevard (being funnelled into areas that don't feel safe) were all mentioned. It was felt that women's needs were absent from the urban planning being undertaken to redevelop the city.

The young women we spoke with highlighted the everyday nature of sexual harassment they experienced. A small number of mums raised concerns over the level of harassment their children have to deal with in schools in general, and the safety in school particularly in relation to toilets, which they felt was impacting their child's health as well as their education.

Welfare/Benefits

Having paid work is an effective way out of poverty. Families where all adults are in full-time work have a low poverty risk. However, having a job is not always enough. In Aberdeen in 22/23 the percentage of children in poverty was **21.8%**.^{iv} It is estimated that over 21-24 **75%** of children in relative poverty after housing costs were living in working households.

The way work interacts with the benefits system can create a poverty trap for many women which due to lower levels of wealth can be difficult for them to get out of, this is often due to a number of means tested benefits being lost once they go above a certain income level i.e. school clothing grant, carers allowance etc.

“

I was happy getting my job but then my universal credit went down and now I struggle to repay debt which last year I wasn't in it's a bad feeling I want to pay more but can't.

It is essential that the way different policy areas interact in this area are understood. For example, how does the Scottish Government's drive to pay the Real Living Wage in the care sector, interact with means tested benefits and how does this impact on different groups.

Council tax

The level of Council Tax and the prospect of further increases was an issue which was highlighted on many occasions. The regressive nature of Council Tax disproportionately impacts low-income households. According to data from the Office of National Statistics, households in the bottom quintile pay **4.6%** of their income on Council Tax, whereas those in the top quintile pay just **1.4%** of their income on this tax.^{vi}

In comparison to other local authorities across Scotland, Aberdeen has one of the highest council tax payments (for 24/25 band D rates were the fourth highest).^{vii} People felt that their council tax was too high and that there was unfairness built into the system due to property values not having been reviewed for some time.

There was a lack of clarity about what individuals received for their Council Tax and a perception that money was not used effectively. While the current debt recovery approach for Council Tax, which with one missed payment can spiral rapidly for low-income households, leads to increasing demands and increasing costs that risk pushing low-income families further into poverty.^{viii}

Health & Wellbeing

The steering group identified that it was not just one area or service which impacted on women's lives and their experience of inequality. The way systems were designed and developed and how these interacted with each other causing barriers and hurdles, played an important role in increasing inequality. This included systems/services such as transport, healthcare, maintenance of public spaces and access to support.

Accessing Support

“

You get pushed from one person to another and nothing ever gets sorted

20% of those who completed the survey had tried to access a wide range of support services from the council or other services within the last 12 months. Of these, some successfully accessed help for their finances, repairs to properties or emergency food

provision. The majority felt they did not get the help they needed as people did not get back to them, waiting times were too long or they were told they had to speak to someone else.

Respondents were asked if they thought they would be successful in accessing support in the future if they needed this. Only **22%** of respondents felt they would get the help they required.

One of the main barriers people felt they would face was not qualifying for help. In relation to this, 58% of respondents thought they would be told no. This, combined with women in particular feeling that others deserve the support more than them, means that the lack of clarity over eligibility criteria for financial support increases the chances of women self-selecting out and not asking for help.

28% of migrants said they wouldn't access support as they would be worried it would affect their immigration status.

Participants spoke about how systems and the way information is provided, is based on the assumption that people know about the support they are entitled to and how to access it. This can be particularly challenging for migrants (as things can be very different in the countries they were born in).

Digital Support

Most public authorities have undertaken a shift to services being provided digitally to manage budgets and increase efficiencies. This has often been coupled with the closure of local offices and a reduction in face-to-face support. Audit Scotland found that Covid 19 had accelerated the use of digital technology but that this had been developed without citizens at its heart and that there had been limited involvement in service design.^{ix}

We heard from women that they felt the council had become more remote and more difficult to access.

The lack of clear and accessible information was problematic for many, and the need to improve communication was suggested by more than **10%** of respondents.

Participants across the community sessions highlighted the need for better collaboration and communication across services. At the moment it is the individual who bears all the responsibility for navigating the different systems. This can feel impossible when people are struggling.

Transport

Affordable, reliable and dependable public transport allows people to access essential opportunities such as paid work, education, shopping, health appointments. Poor public transport infrastructure can negatively impact women to a greater extent as they tend to rely on this more than their male counterparts.

The way in which public transport systems are designed are often problematic for women because they are designed to take people in and out of the city centre for work during peak hours. However, women are more likely to undertake multiple short journeys during the day. Women are also more likely to be reliant on buses for travel.

You can't rely on the buses to get to important appointments, if the first bus is late then this has a knock-on effect to the next bus.

Women told us:

- Buses in Aberdeen are often unreliable, with instances of buses arriving late or not at all. Passengers have reported waiting for extended periods, leading to missed appointments and delays for children going to school;
- There is a lack of adequate night bus services, making it difficult for individuals to return home after events or outings. Many areas are not serviced by night buses, forcing people to rely on taxis or other means of transport including walking;
- Women felt unsafe while using public transport, especially at night and this puts them off going out;
- Passengers often lack clear information about bus schedules and routes, which can lead to confusion and frustration;
- Roadworks and changes to road layouts have complicated travel within the city, leading to further delays and confusion for bus users;
- The cost of public transport can be prohibitive for some users, particularly families.

24% of survey respondents told us they struggled with transport costs and **33%** said they had to make changes to other areas of household expenditure to manage these costs.

The cost of buses in Aberdeen were seen as extremely expensive. Fares have just risen to **£5.55** for a day ticket. This compares to **£5.90** in Glasgow, **£5.00** in Edinburgh and **£4.65** in Dundee.

For a woman working **5** days a week and earning the median wage, travelling by bus would account for about **4%** of their wage.



The full report sets out a wide range of recommendations across Aberdeen City Council, as well as for the Scottish and UK Governments. A number of these recommend that the council analyses the data it collects to understand who benefits from current provision and how this helps women to undertake paid work and how this contributes or addresses the issues outlined in the report. Others including embedding a no-wrong door approach and involving citizens in service design processes aim to ensure that services are not inadvertently putting up barriers that stop people getting the support they need. Undertaking gender analysis to further understand how responses to the housing crisis, to the development of major infrastructure projects and to the move to digital responses are all recommended to ensure that response do not exacerbate women's experiences of inequality. A full set of recommendations can be found at **Appendix 1**.



Scottish Women's Budget Group

www.swbg.org.uk

SWBG Is a Scottish Charity,
SC050221 regulated by the
Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).



**Scottish
Women's
Budget
Group**

Aberdeen Gender

Inequality and Poverty

Report

2025

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Introduction

Introduction

The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) were commissioned by Aberdeen City Council's Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee to explore the impact of poverty and gender inequality on women and their families in Aberdeen and identify with participants solutions that could address these issues for individuals, families and the wider community.

Issues such as austerity, wage stagnation, rising inflation, and the Covid-19 pandemic, all impact women due to pre-existing structural inequalities. Rising costs have hit individuals on the lowest incomes the hardest. This disproportionately affects women as they are more likely to experience poverty throughout their lifetime with lower levels of savings and wealth in comparison to men as well as being unable to increase paid work due to caring responsibilities. Particular groups of women are hit hardest such as disabled women, ethnic minority households, single parents, survivors of abuse, women with no recourse to public funds, and those with caring responsibilities.¹

SWBG use gender budgeting approaches to understand how the way money is raised and how it is spent, can exacerbate or address gender inequality.

As part of this project, the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee have committed to providing a response to those who participated within 6 months of them considering the contents of this report.



Structure of this Report

This report sets out the approach taken to undertake this research then sets out the context for women in Aberdeen using 2022 Census data.

It then sets out the key factors that impact women in Aberdeen as identified by the project steering group. Followed by what those who engaged in the research told us and the recommendations that arise from this. This is separated into sections on Care and Caring; Safety; Welfare/Benefits; and Health and Wellbeing. These sections are based on the key issues highlighted by the steering group.

Methodology

The project took a mixed methods approach, using the principles of a citizens assembly combined with a gender budgeting approach to guide the research. Key principles included:

Participative: the challenges and the solutions were identified by the community;

Intersectional: ensuring we involved and heard from a diverse range of people;

Informed: the steering group were supported to build on their experiences and understanding.

The mixed methods approach enabled us to hear from those who have experience of living on a low income, those who work in organisations that provide support, as well as those who have experience of both.

Underpinning this approach was a commitment to ethical, non-extractive knowledge gathering, which tried to ensure that participation was proportionate and meaningful.

The intention was to create a robust and fuller understanding of how gender inequality impacts on women and their families by engaging with a representative sample from across Aberdeen.

Stakeholder consultation and data collection took place from October 2024 to March 2025.

To do this, we undertook the following:

Steering Group

Recruited and worked with a steering group of 9 women from a wide range of backgrounds. The steering group was recruited through social media and community

organisations operating in Aberdeen (these included Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), Grampian Women's Aid (GWA), Station House Media Unit (SHMU)).

Who made up the steering group:



The steering group met 9 times to help develop the focus for the research, to analyse the data and suggest solutions to the problems identified

Sessions included:

- Introductory session;
- What is gender budgeting and identifying issues affecting women;
- What are the problems accessing services in Aberdeen and who are the key groups we want to engage with;
- Designing survey questions & identifying data we want to review;
- Reviewing census and other data;
- Analysing the data from the survey;
- Identifying solutions.

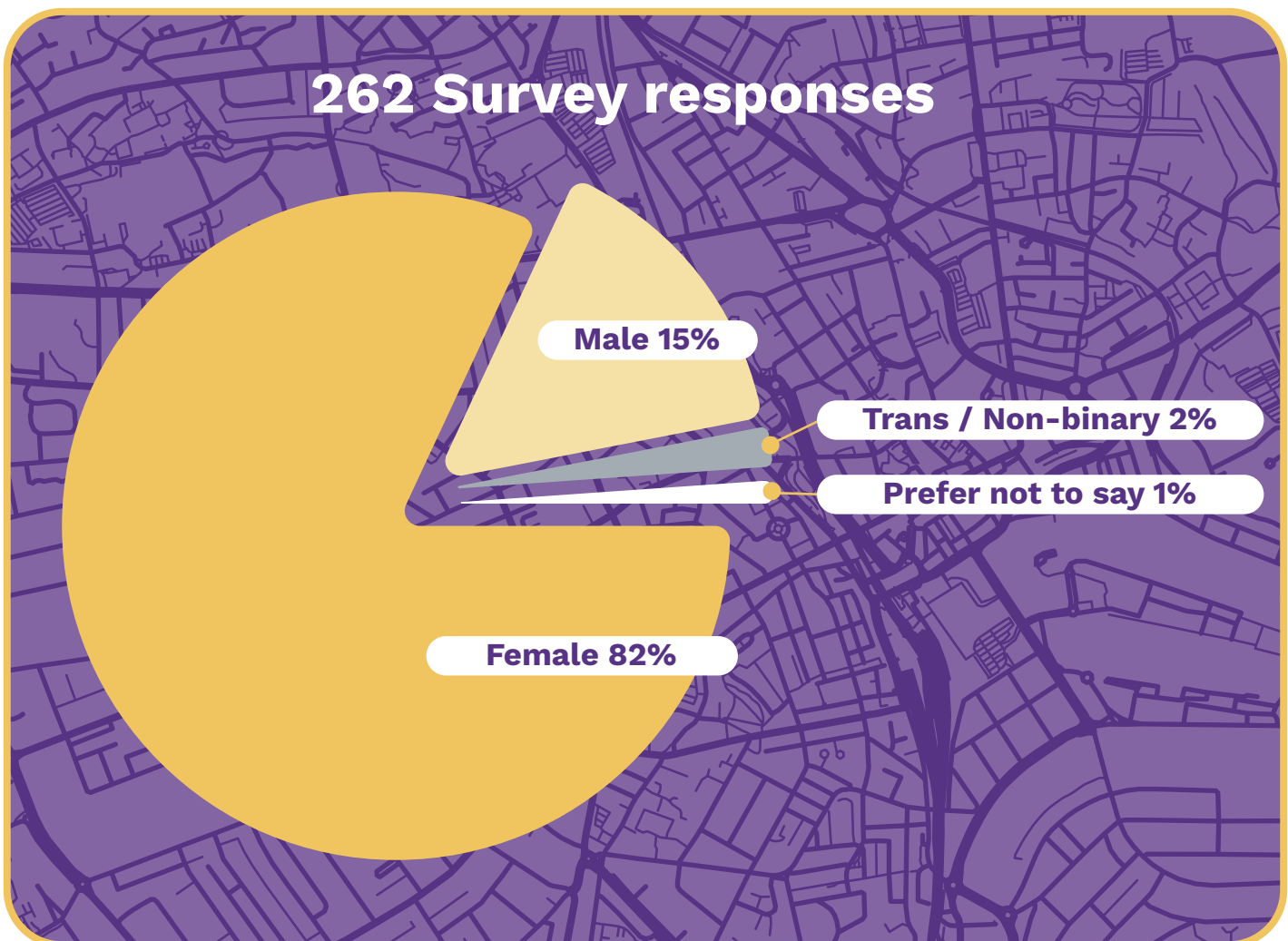
Online survey

A community survey was circulated online over November-December 2024. The survey focused on the following areas:

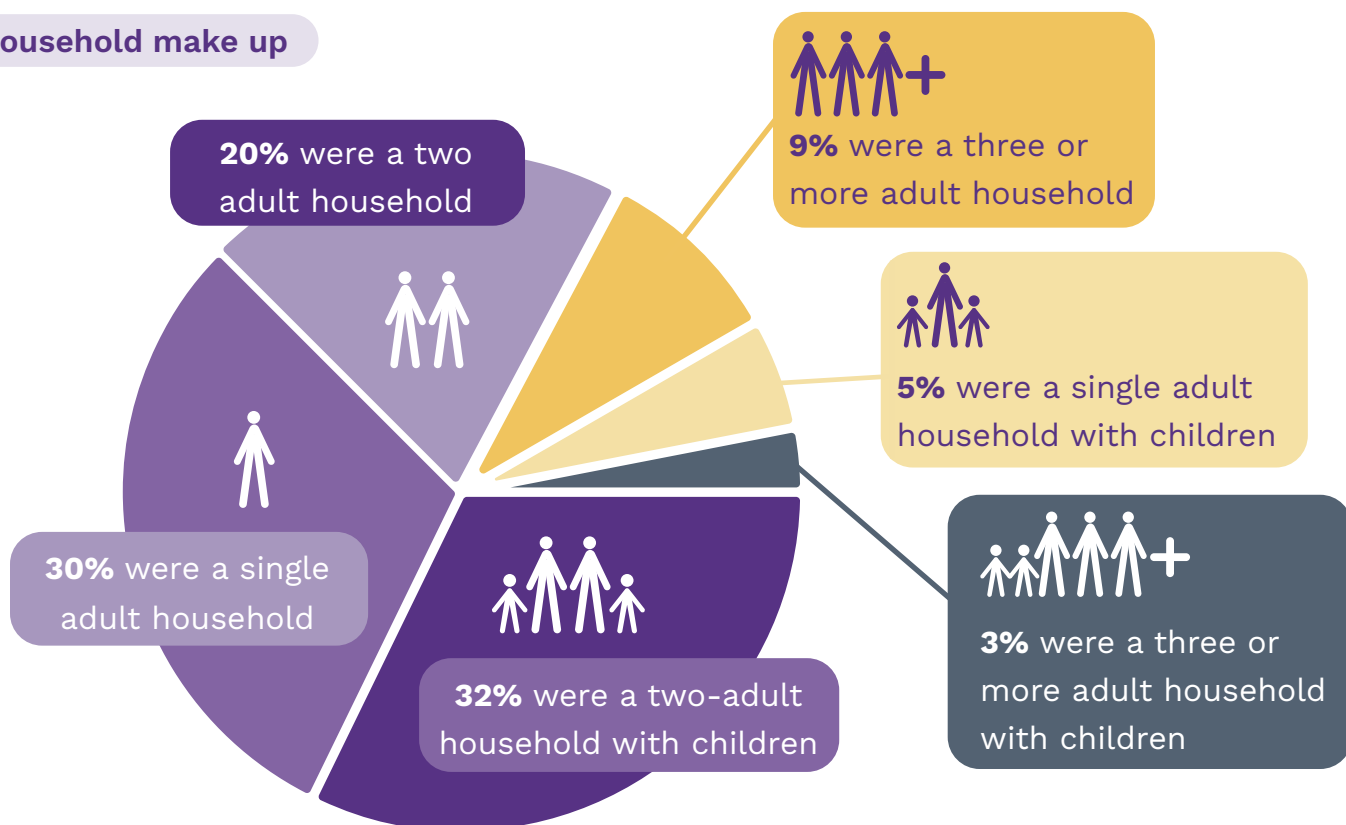
- The Cost-of-Living Crisis, Debt & Savings;
- Accessing Support;
- Childcare;
- Looking after other people;
- Housing and Safety.

These areas were identified by the steering group as key issues impacting on women in Aberdeen. The steering group supported the design of the survey and helped circulate the survey across their networks/communities.

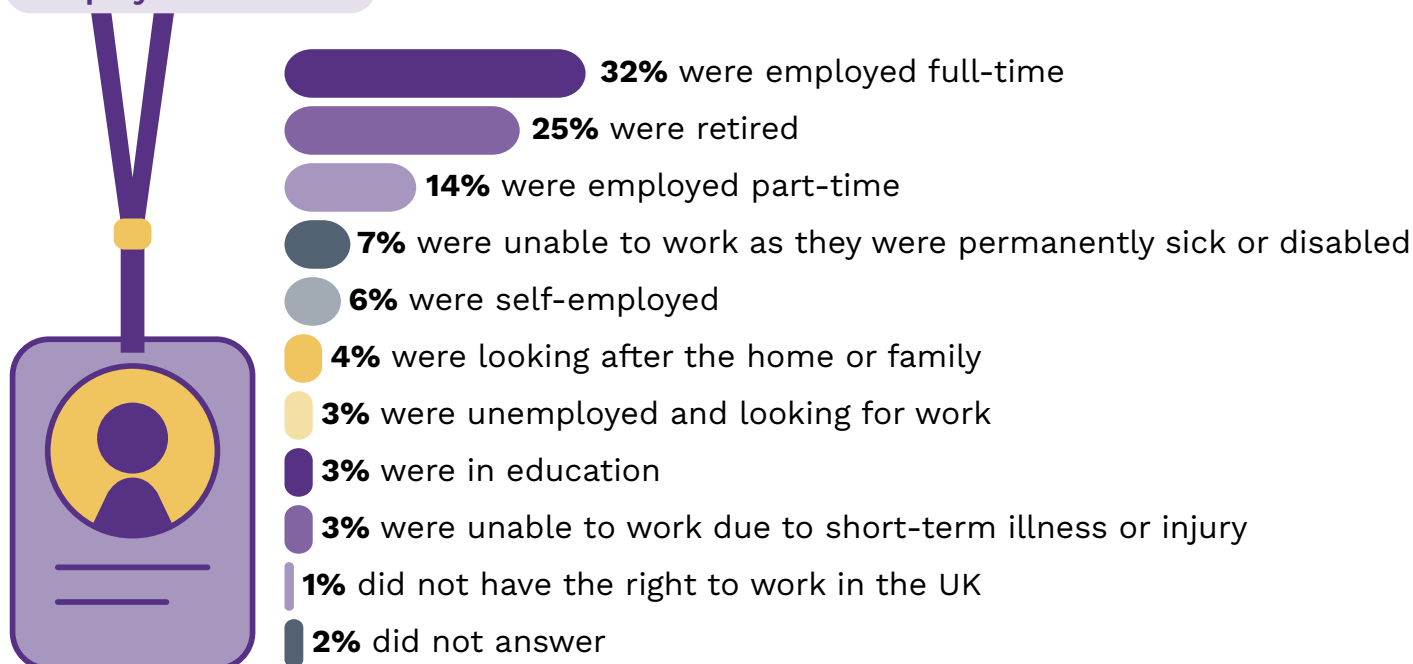
The survey received **262** responses from across Aberdeen. **82%** of survey respondents were female, **15%** were male, **2%** were trans or non-binary and **1%** preferred not to say.



Household make up



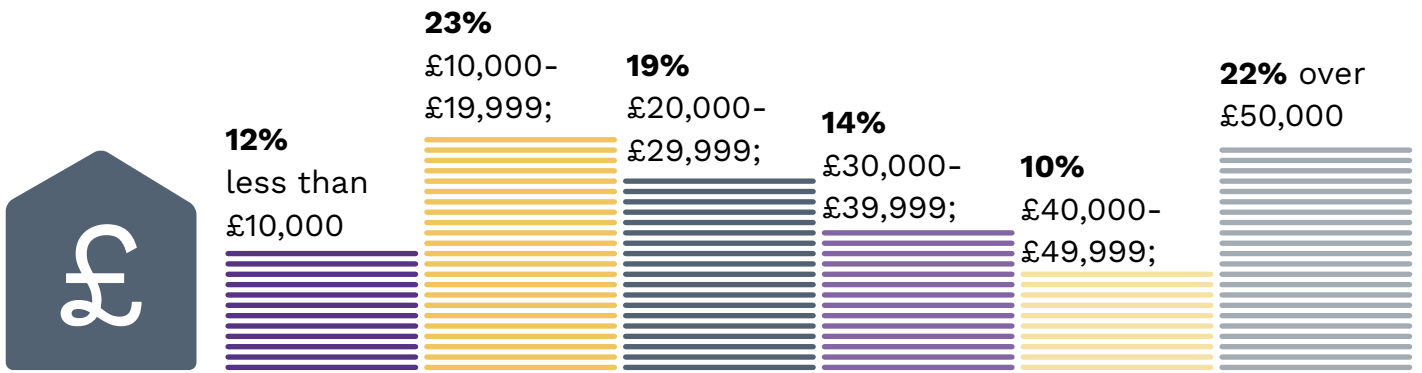
Employment Status



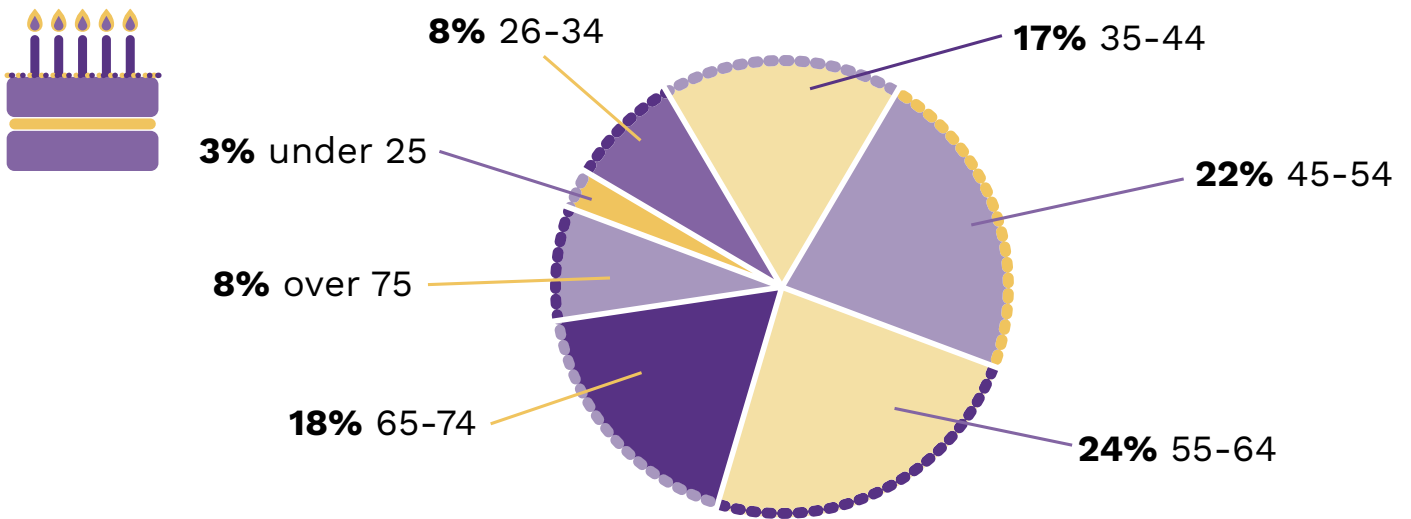
Sector of employment



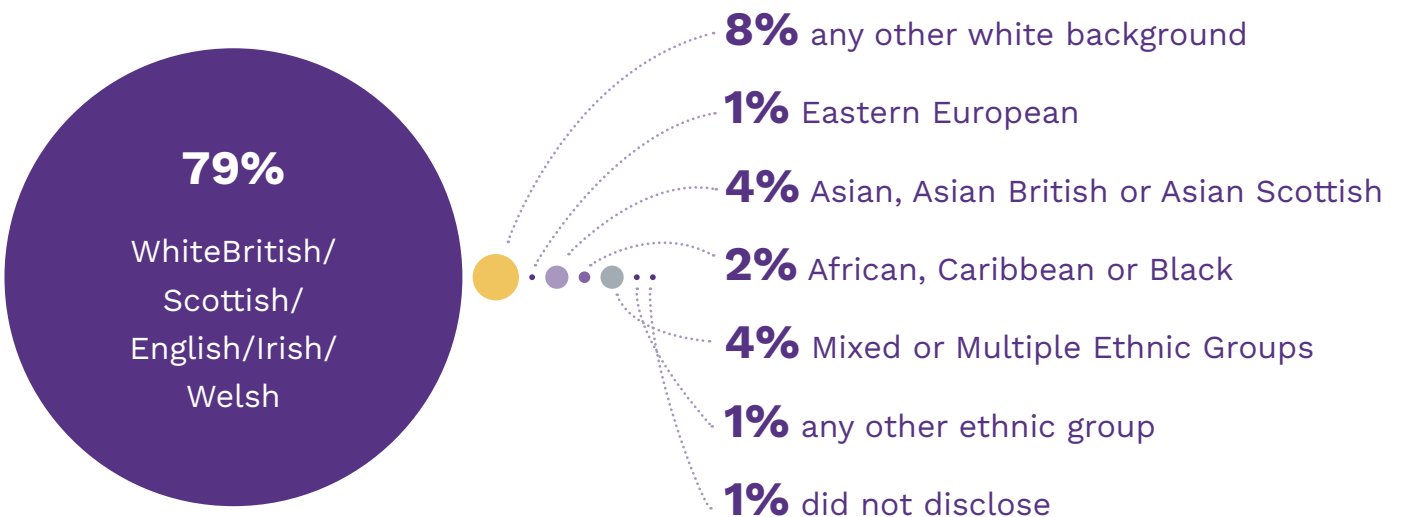
Household Income



Age



Ethnicity



Immigration status



Recourse to public funds

2%

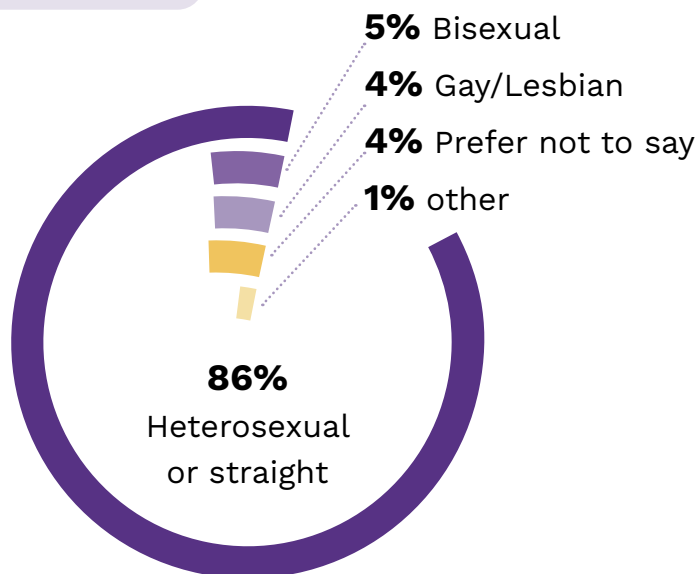
of respondents had No
Recourse to Public Funds

Disability

32%

said they had a physical or
mental impairment, which has
a substantial and long-term
effect on a person's ability to
carry out day-to-day tasks.

Sexual orientation



In addition to the community survey, we attended a Community Learning and Development event and asked attendees to complete a short online survey that asked them to identify the issues they felt impact on women and girls in their communities.

Focus Groups

We worked with a number of community organisations to run small focus groups targeting specific groups. Focus groups were held with:

- Station House Media Unit - women living on a low income(7 participants);
- Grampian Women's Aid - women experiencing domestic abuse (10 participants);
- Minority Ethnic Carers Of People Project - women from the Gypsy Traveller Community (5 participants);
- Aberdeen Action on Disability - disabled people (20 participants);
- Aberdeen Youth Movement – young women (7 participants).

There was also a focus group for professionals working in Aberdeen.

Community Events

We jointly organised 2 World Café style events to engage with women:

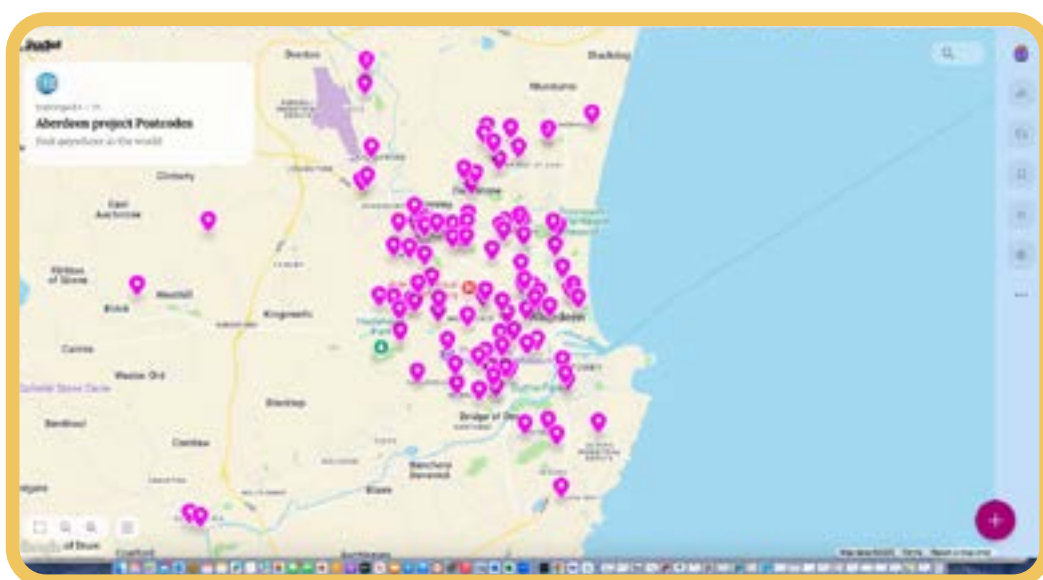
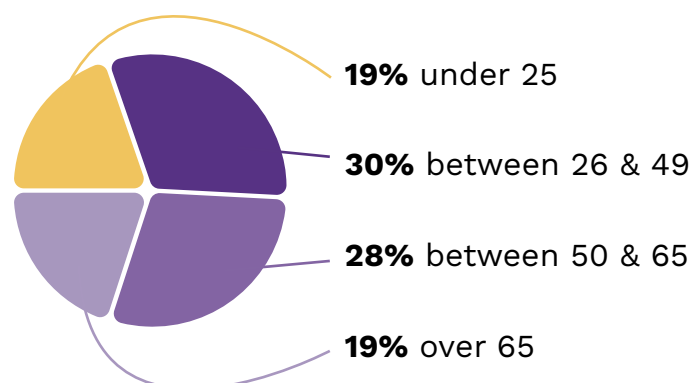
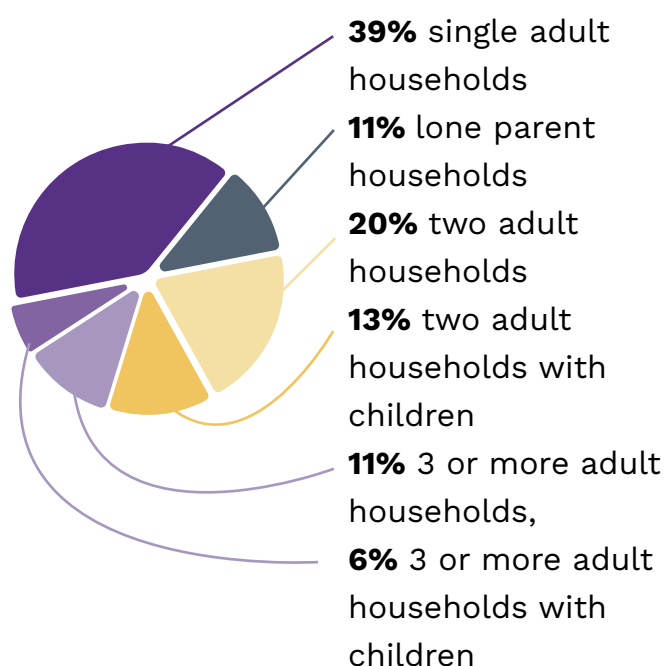
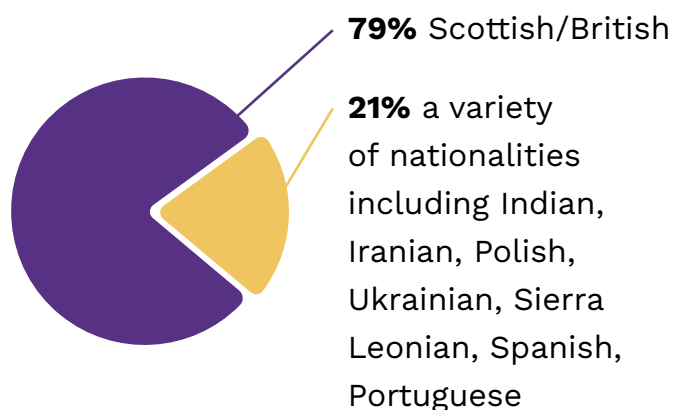
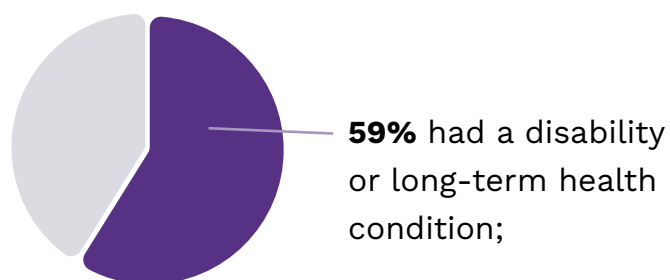
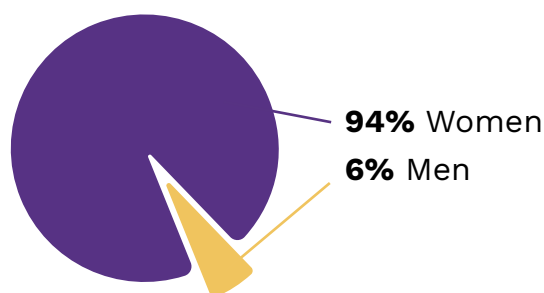
- Community food initiatives north east (Cfine) - women who have used their services (20 participants);
- Middlefield Community Project event (20 participants).

During these sessions we focussed on Care and Caring, Safety, Welfare/Benefits and Health & Wellbeing. At these events we confirmed with the women who attended that these were issues that impacted on them and started to identify solutions to the issues they were experiencing. See Appendix 1 for the guide for facilitators at these events.

In addition to events organised as part of the project, we also attended community venues/events to speak with individuals about the issues they were experiencing:

- North East Scotland College (30 attendees);
- Inchgarth Community Centre (30 attendees);
- Woodside Women's Day event (80 attendees).

229 individuals were engaged across the focus groups and community events. The demographics for those we engaged with were as follows:



The map shows some of the areas the people who engaged with this project stay.

Data analysis

We analysed the data from focus groups and free text answers from surveys using thematic analysis, where coded themes are drawn from the data rather than from a pre-defined framework. We also used data from wider research to inform our analysis to provide wider contextual information. Finally, we also carried out some descriptive statistical analysis of the community survey to identify broad trends and points.

Desk based research

We reviewed key documents including census information, committee documents, Aberdeen Population Needs Assessment and other relevant research.

Limitations of research

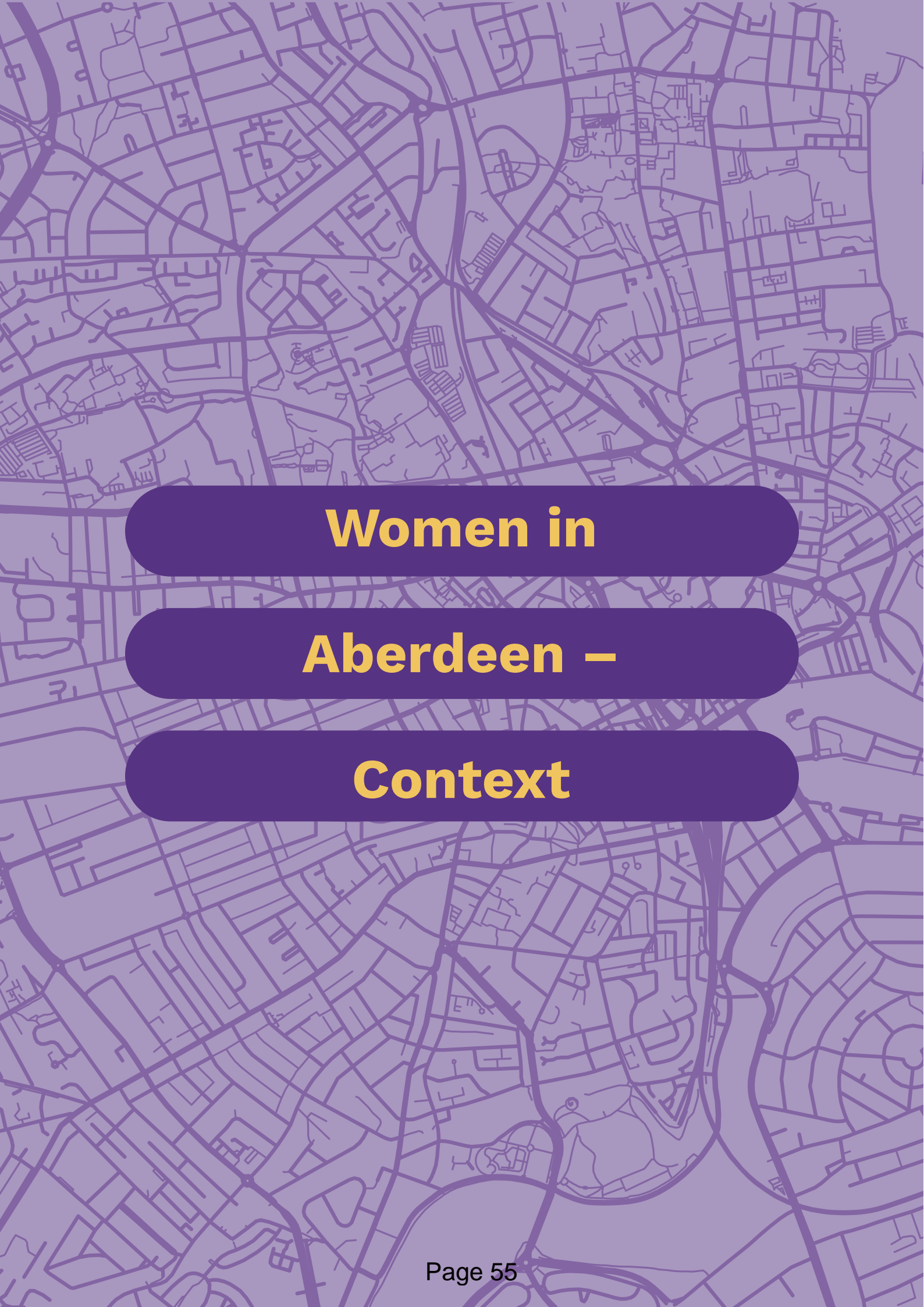
The research took place over a six-month period, from recruitment of the steering group to final report. This impacted on the number of people we could engage with and the groups we were able to reach. While we endeavoured to speak to a reflective sample of women from across Aberdeen, there will ultimately be groups we did not reach.

The project focused on gathering the views of people in Aberdeen. Interviews with Council officers or Councillors have not informed this report. While we had the opportunity to potentially access further data held by Aberdeen City Council, the timescales for the project didn't allow this.

The number of respondents from Black and Minority Ethnic communities has meant we have been unable to disaggregate data by different community groups.

Issues outwith the control of Aberdeen City Council came up regularly during the data collection phase. We have reflected these issues in this report but have mainly focussed on the areas which are within the control of the council or health and social care partnership.

Safety within the city was a topic raised often. While we have provided recommendations on some areas within the report, this subject would benefit from further work to further understand the solutions needed.



Women in Aberdeen – Context

Women in Aberdeen – Context

Across Scotland women are more likely to be poor, have lower levels of savings and wealth, and are less able to increase paid work than men due to caring responsibilities. Overall, women are more likely to be in lower paid or insecure work, are twice as reliant on the social security system, and have lower and less access to pensions, this is no different in Aberdeen.

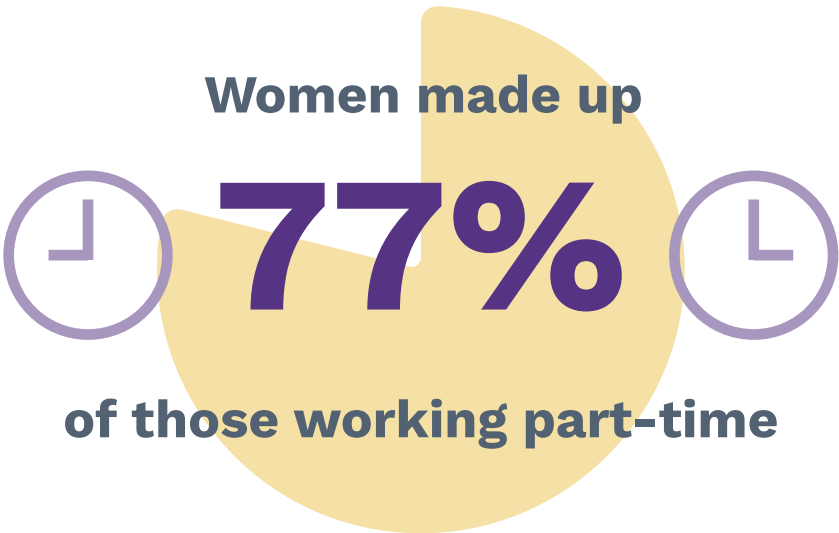
Data from the 2022 Census shows that there were **224,021** people living in Aberdeen, **51%** of whom were female.

50,986 women were in work at the time of the census and, of these, **15,381** were in part time employment. Women made up **77%** of those working part-time.

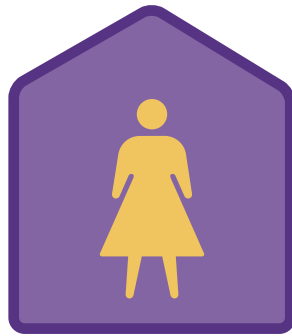
67,637 people were economically inactive at the time of the census, **57%** of these were women. Of the **5047** people economically inactive as a result of looking after the home/family, **5029 (99%)** were women. **57%** of retirees were women and **51%** of those not in work as a result of a disability were women.

At the time of the census, **18,888** of people said they provided unpaid care. **58%** of these were female. **59%** of those who provide over **35 hours** of unpaid care were also women.²

2024 weekly median salary (resident population)	
Full-Time Workers	721.7
Male Full-Time Workers	736.7
Female Full-Time Workers	708.0

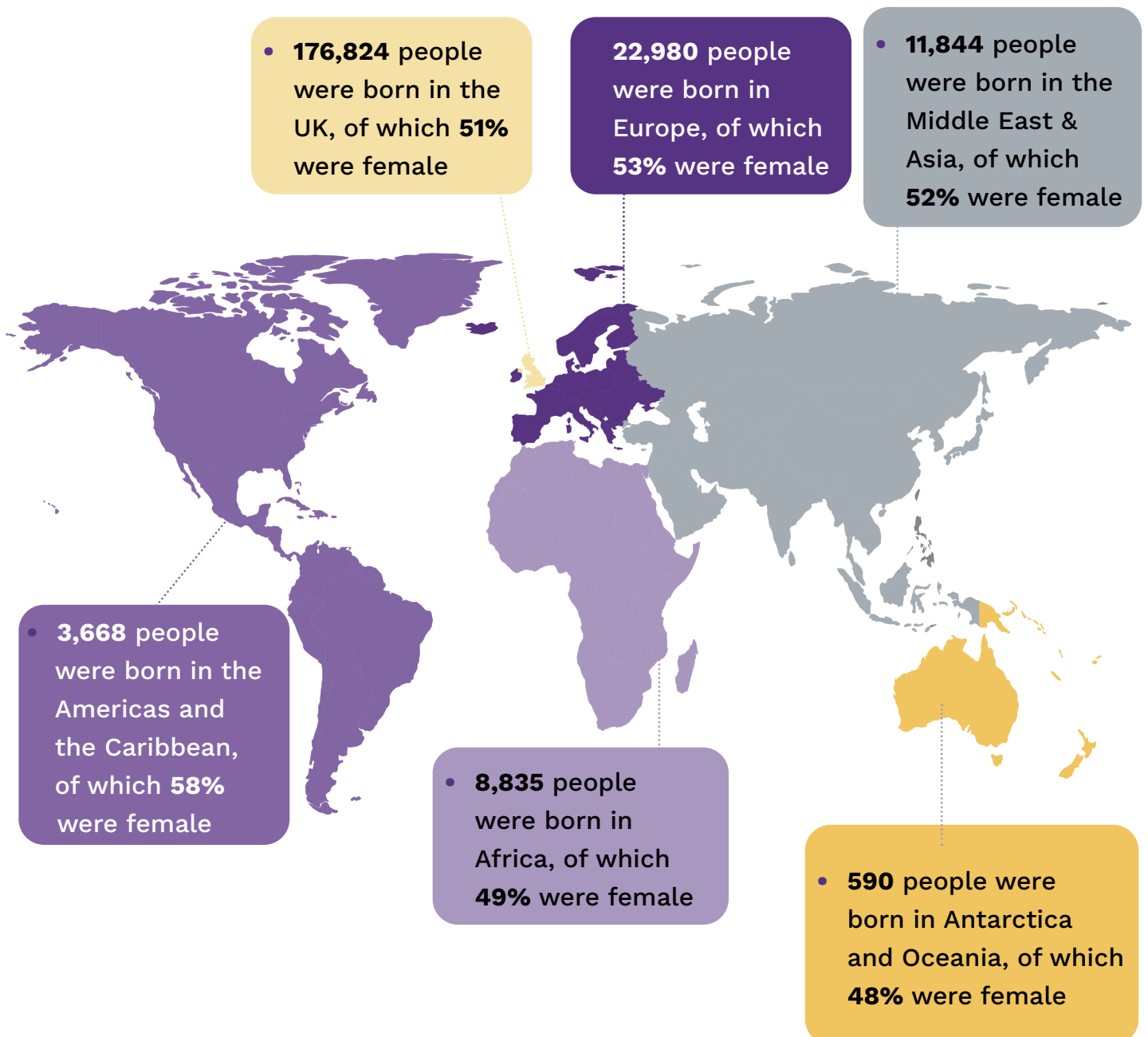


At the time of the census there were **47,523** single households



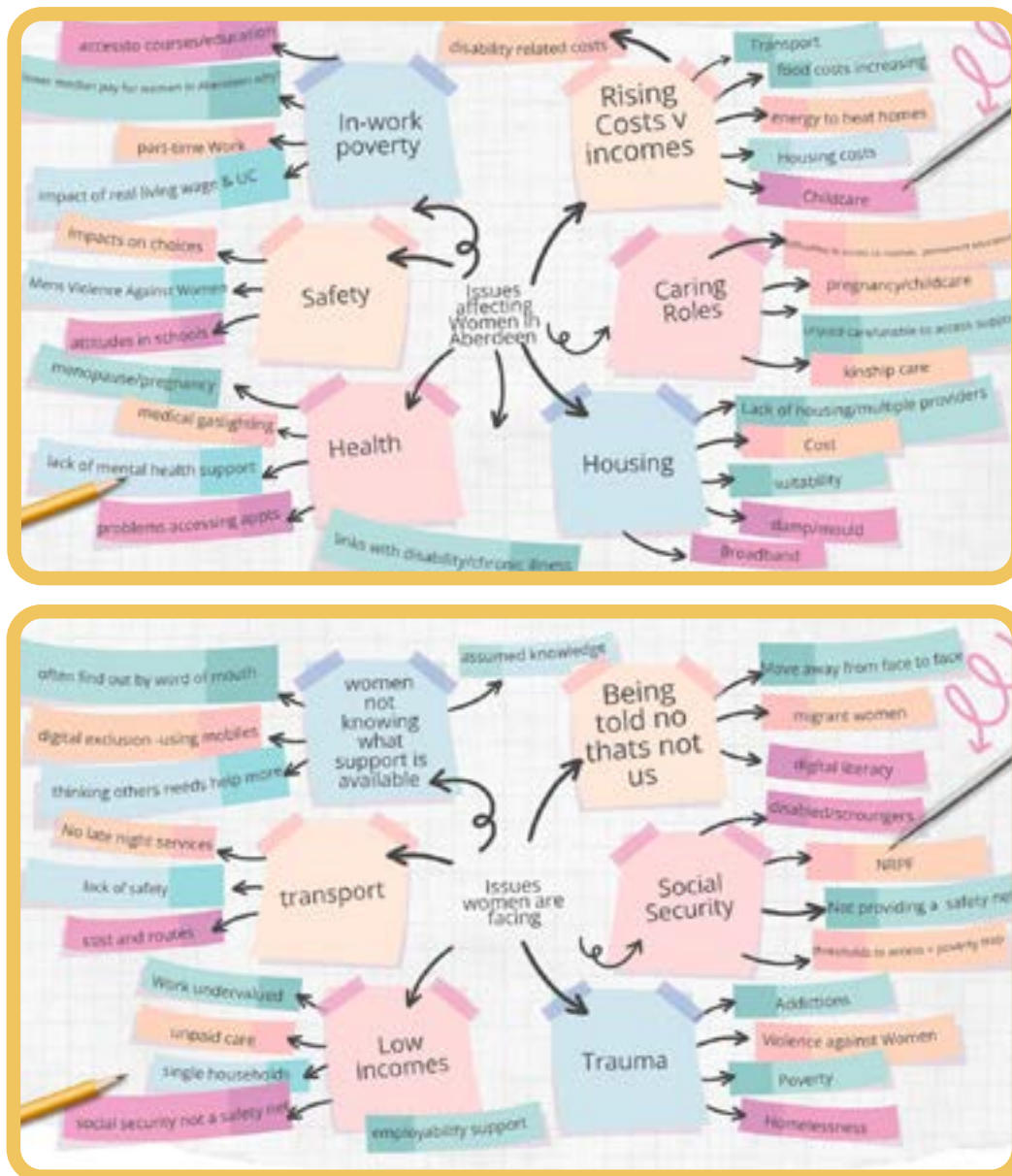
of which **51%** were women.

87% of the population were white, of which **51%** were female. In answering the question of where people were born the census shows:



Overview from the Steering Group

The steering group worked to identify the issues that were affecting women in Aberdeen thinking about their own experiences and those of their family, friends and wider community. The following illustrations highlight the areas identified:



Many of the challenges identified highlight interlinked structural barriers that women face because the different needs of men and women are not recognised within decision making at a local or national level. These systemic barriers need to be addressed at a societal level as opposed to being left to individual women to address. Caring responsibilities, social security, work, transport, health and housing were all highlighted as significant issues for women in Aberdeen that impacted on the choices and options available to them. This means a gendered lens needs to be taken to decisions around how services are delivered, whether these are new services or about the delivery of services currently provided. As highlighted in the following example:

Women who experience domestic abuse often lack the finances to leave an abusive partner or seek support. They do not have the resources to take expensive buses, or the time to spend over an hour to reach services without exposing themselves to increased risk. They might not have access to a phone or computer to be able to use online/phone based services and they cannot take the chance of losing any support systems they have by having to move for housing.

Many of the challenges identified highlight interlinked structural barriers that women face because the different needs of men and women are not recognised within decision making at a local or national level

The steering group spent time considering how the way services are currently delivered can create unintended barriers to women (and other groups) trying to get the support they need. They felt that:

- Siloed approaches taken by the public sector often meant people did not get the help they needed as agencies often only deal with one thing;
- ‘Gatekeeping’ stops people being able to speak with the individuals they need to;
- If people’s situation is complex, the digital support service which people are being pushed to use cannot cope because this does not follow the flowchart that has been developed in a service design process;
- People often do not know who can help or what support they are entitled to, there are a lot of assumptions made about people knowing what help is available.

The following pictures highlight some models made by the Steering Group to highlight this.



‘Which option will get me the help I need’



‘The gatekeeper’



‘You only see one part of me’ - the siloed approach

The background of the page is a stylized, orange-toned map of a city street grid. The map features a dense network of streets, with some larger, more prominent thoroughfares and others as smaller, more intricate lanes. The lines are thin and uniform in color, creating a complex, geometric pattern that fills the entire page. In the center of the page, there is a dark purple, rounded rectangular button. The word "Findings" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within this button. At the bottom center of the page, the text "Page 60" is written in a small, black, sans-serif font.

Findings

Findings

The cost of living crisis and how it is impacting on survey respondents.

Across this project the majority of people stated that compared to this time last year they felt financially worse off. This amounted to **65%** of respondents. This was due to costs rising faster than wages/benefits and people not having an opportunity to increase their incomes.

“ *I have the same income as last year but everything costs more including the interest on big credit card debts. It's a cycle of misery that you can't fight to get out of.*

“ *My monthly outgoings have risen yet wage growth hasn't happened. Also, I receive no state help such as the Scottish Child Payment because I earn just over the threshold.*

“ *The prices of things are too high. I am exhausted from working so much and not able to afford all meals in a day.*

Individuals who stated they felt better off gave the following reasons: being able to increase their income through moving into work, changing roles and/or due to increased interest on savings. Where people felt financially the same, it was because they had already reduced their outgoings in the previous 12 months, which was helping them manage their costs.

“ *We balanced our books after all the prices went up. We had to cut our cloth. If utility prices went down we would have more cash to spend on children's clothes and fresh food.*

About a third of respondents stated they were struggling to manage everyday household expenditure (see table 1 for a breakdown). This increased for single parents, disabled, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and single households and decreased for male respondents (the men who took the survey tended to have higher incomes, were more likely to work full time and in the private sector than other respondents. They were less likely to be disabled and there were no single parents).

Table 1. How are you managing household expenses
(responses based on those who have the costs).

Household expense	Yes, I struggle to manage these costs	No, but I have had to make changes to other areas of household spending	No, I am able to manage this household cost
Food (255)	30%	39%	31%
Energy (248)	38%	39%	23%
Housing (229)	31%	36%	33%
Transport (219)	24%	33%	43%
Broadband (237)	23%	32%	45%
Other Household Costs (244)	33%	37%	30%
Childcare (41)	54%	34%	22%

Table 2. % of men and women who are struggling to manage household bills¹

Household Expense	Women (215)	Men (40)
Food	29%	20%
Energy	39%	24%
Housing	32%	20%
Transport	24%	14%
Broadband	23%	16%
Other household costs	35%	19%

Table 3. % of different household groups who are struggling to manage household bills

Household Expense	Disabled people (81)	Single households (78)	Single parents (14)	BME households (29)
Food	37%	37%	69%	33%
Energy	48%	43%	54%	50%
Housing	38%	34%	66%	46%
Transport	40%	34%	50%	24%
Broadband	33%	31%	38%	23%
Other household costs	50%	43%	54%	35%

¹ note that childcare costs have not been used in this table as there were only 5 male respondents who said they had these costs

Respondents stated that in order to manage costs in the last 12 months they had:

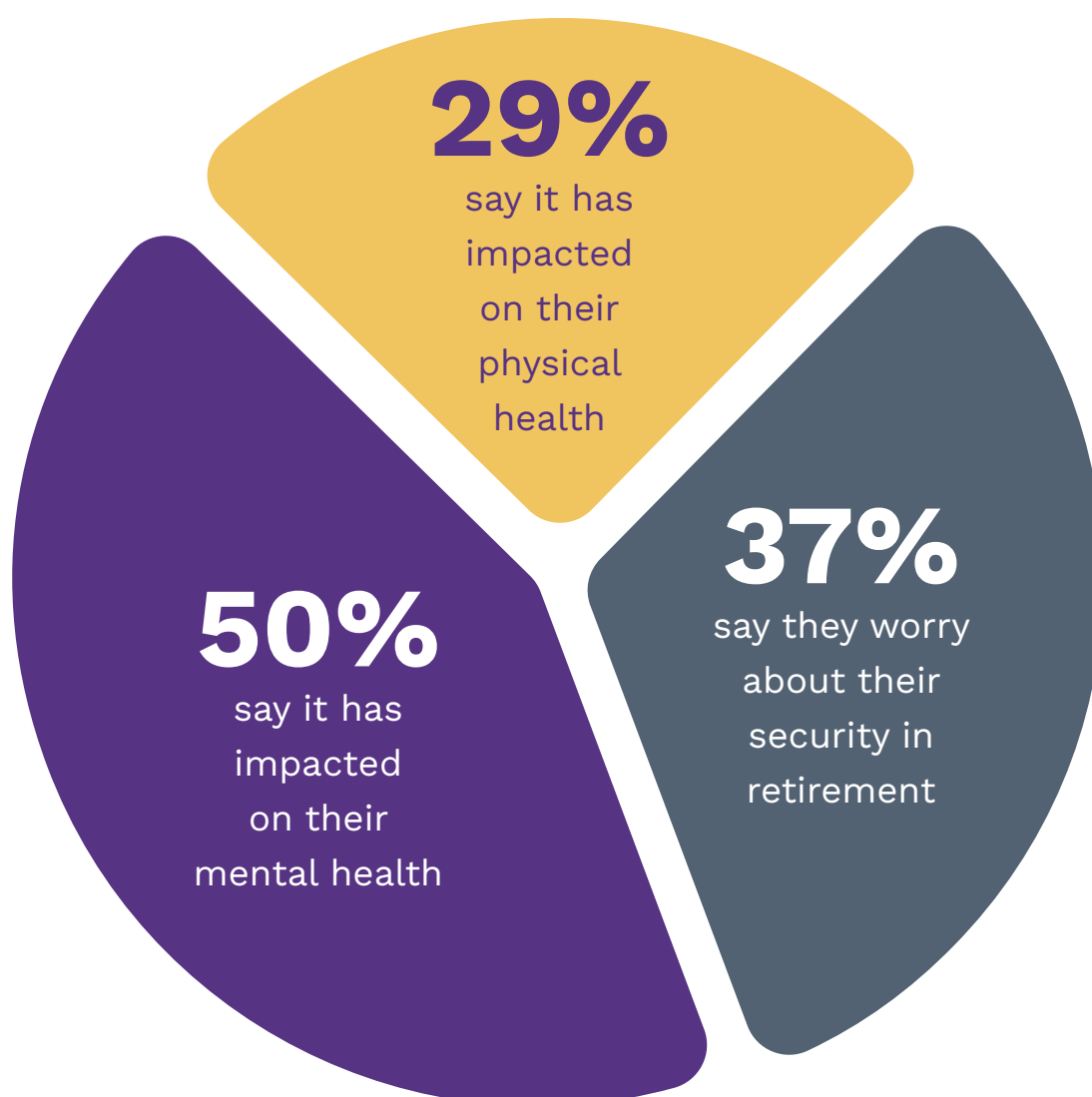
Strategy	All	Disabled people	Single parents	Single households	Single households
Cut back on food expenditure	61%	67%	85%	65%	82%
Not put the heating on	56%	68%	77%	65%	64%
Not going to the dentist	24%	37%	23%	33%	25%
Cutting back on journeys	35%	43%	54%	29%	32%
Cutting back on eating out	61%	69%	77%	59%	64%
Cancelling tv subscriptions/ broadband	28%	37%	38%	22%	36%
Using savings	54%	54%	30%	55%	54%
Taking on debt	18%	26%	54%	13%	25%
Not replacing clothes/shoes for myself	49%	60%	85%	54%	40%
Taking on more hours at work	12%	4%	15%	9%	21%
Doing more unpaid care work	3%	1%	0	1%	7%

Table 4. % of different household group using strategies to manage household bills

Strategies used by different groups tend to reflect the options available to them to manage household costs. For example, disabled people are often unable to increase their income by taking on more hours at work as this is not an option open to them, which explains why they use other options at higher levels. For single parents, the use of savings may be lower as many women do not have access to savings due to lower levels of wealth.

Respondents outlined the impact that their financial situation had on them:

- **50%** say it has impacted on their mental health;
- **29%** it has impacted on their physical health;
- **37%** say they worry about their security in retirement.





Care and Caring

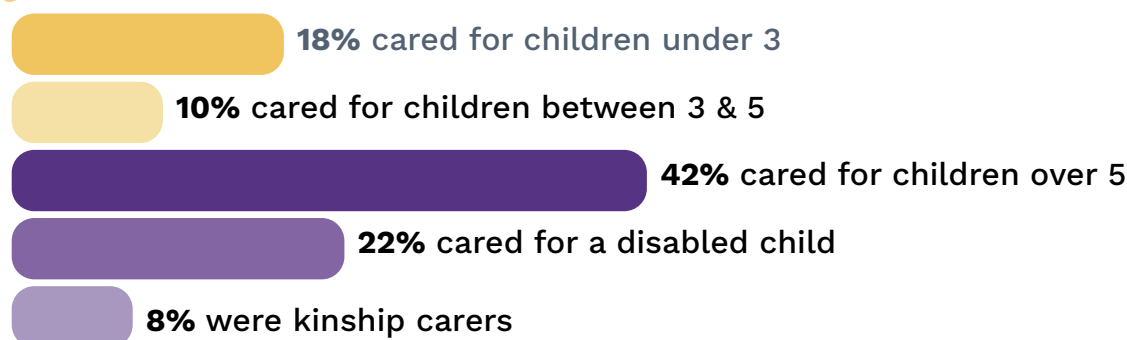
Care and Caring

Childcare

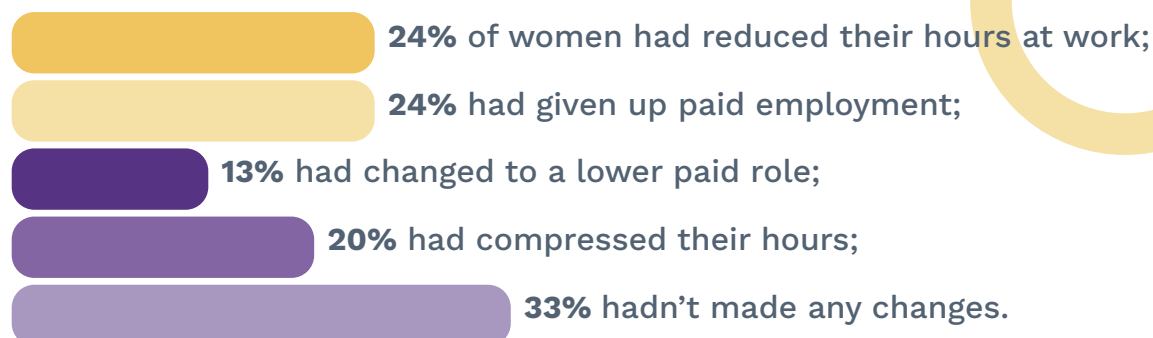
For women who responded to the survey, the average number of hours they spent undertaking care-related tasks was **4.5 hours** a day. For men it was **2.5 hours** a day.

27.5% of respondents had childcare responsibilities.

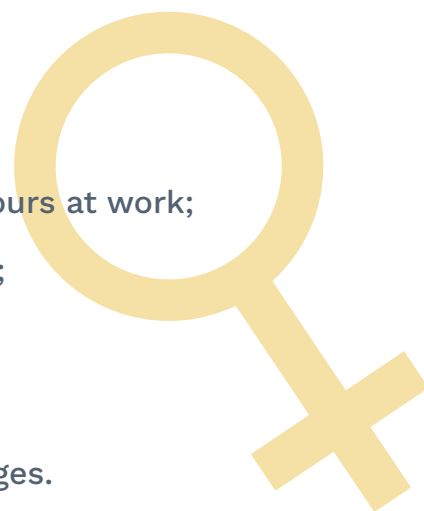
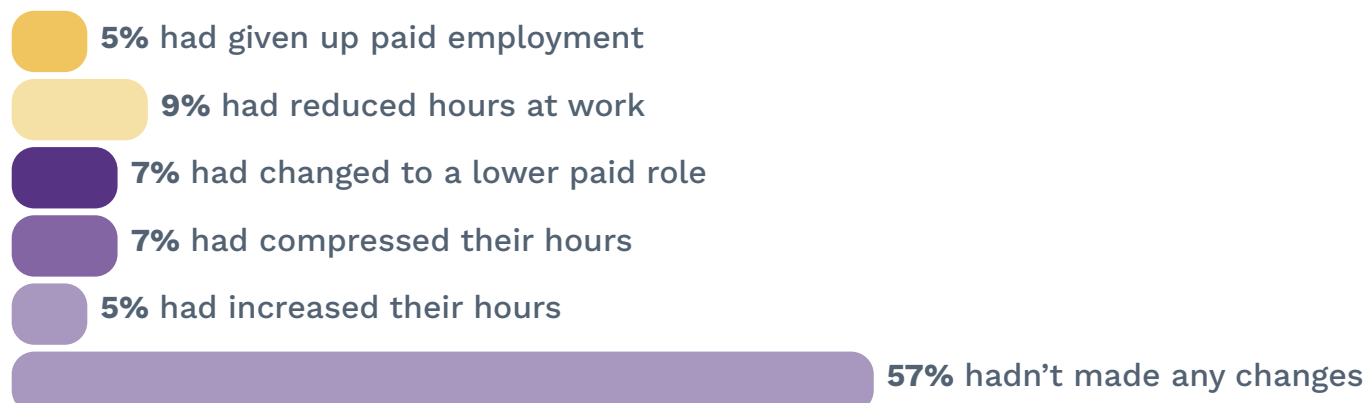
Of those who had childcare responsibilities:



In order to manage childcare:



This was in comparison to their partners, of whom:



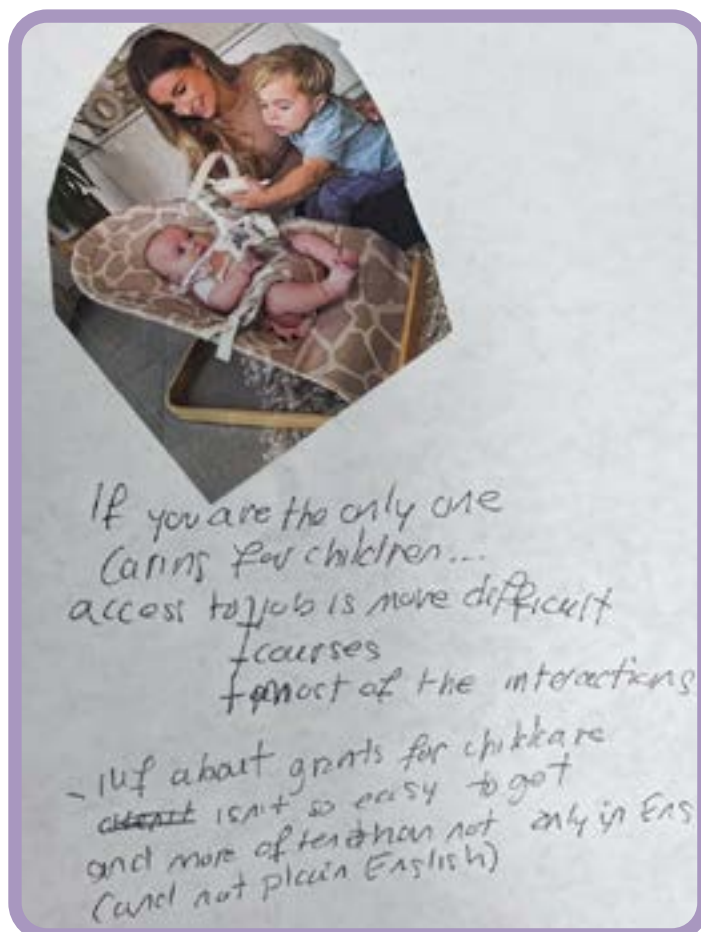
The hours women work are often dependent on the number and ages of their children and their access to affordable childcare. The disproportionate responsibility for childcare constrains women's employment opportunities and their income which has lifelong impacts.

40% of women who have childcare responsibilities felt that childcare had impacted on the hours of paid work they can do, while **25%** said it impacted on the type of paid work they can do. For BME women (where there is often little extended family support) this increased to **64%** and **29%**. While nearly half of all single parents stated that managing childcare had impacted their financial wellbeing.

“ *When I did work, my nursery fees were £1200 per month which didn't make work viable. It was a huge stress when my kids were sick as we have no family to rely on for help. Therefore I had to take time off work and my employers were not happy. I also got sick more often as I was with the sick kids.*

“ *Even if you've got very, very high qualification and you do very good job, you never get that opportunity because you are blocked because you've got family and other responsibilities.*

This highlights the 'motherhood penalty' that mothers face in the workplace, leading to lower wages, reduced career opportunities, and slower career advancement compared to both men and childless women.⁵



Affordability and availability of childcare in Aberdeen

In the focus group sessions and the survey, we heard that the cost and the lack of accessible flexible childcare both impacted on women's ability to increase their hours and/or to move jobs.

“

I have managed to adjust my start and end times to tie in with school hours 3 days a week (I work 28 hours over 5 days). There is no option to increase my hours any further than I already have with my organisation. I have no external childcare support.

The average cost for childcare for children under 3 is over **£14,000** per year. Over **50%** of those with childcare costs (for all age groups) said they struggled to manage childcare costs while **34%** had to make changes to other areas of household spending to be able to afford their childcare costs.

“

I was using a childminder and generally my salary went to the childminder and nothing was left really.

“

We are unable to save any money each month, even with the 2.5 days funding, we have 2 years of savings to make up for and are starting from scratch. We have no financial safety net and rely on credit cards for unexpected bills.

Aberdeen has seen a decrease of **23.6%** in the number of childcare providers between June 2017 and June 2024. This figure was **33.7%** for childminders.⁶ The lack of accessible/flexible childcare meant that women have had to turn down work or give up work which involved non-9-5 hours.

“

For example I worked shifts morning & evening I had to be at work at seven but childminders start work at eight o'clock.

Managing childcare and the costs can also be particularly difficult if there are mixed-age children in families.

“

Increased costs by utilising a provider that provides care during the hours my husband and I work for under 3. Breakfast/after school club for child 5+ to work around working hours. Will be reducing household income in 6 months when changing contract to term time to manage school holidays.

In August 2021, the Scottish Government introduced a new funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) offer, which provides families with up to 1140 hours per year funded childcare for all three- and four-year-olds. Two-year-olds from households facing the most socio-economic disadvantage also qualify, with the Scottish Government using this investment to improve outcomes for children.

Scottish Government data shows that in Aberdeen **97%** of eligible 3–4-year-olds receive funded childcare, for eligible 2-year-olds this reduces to **40%**.⁷

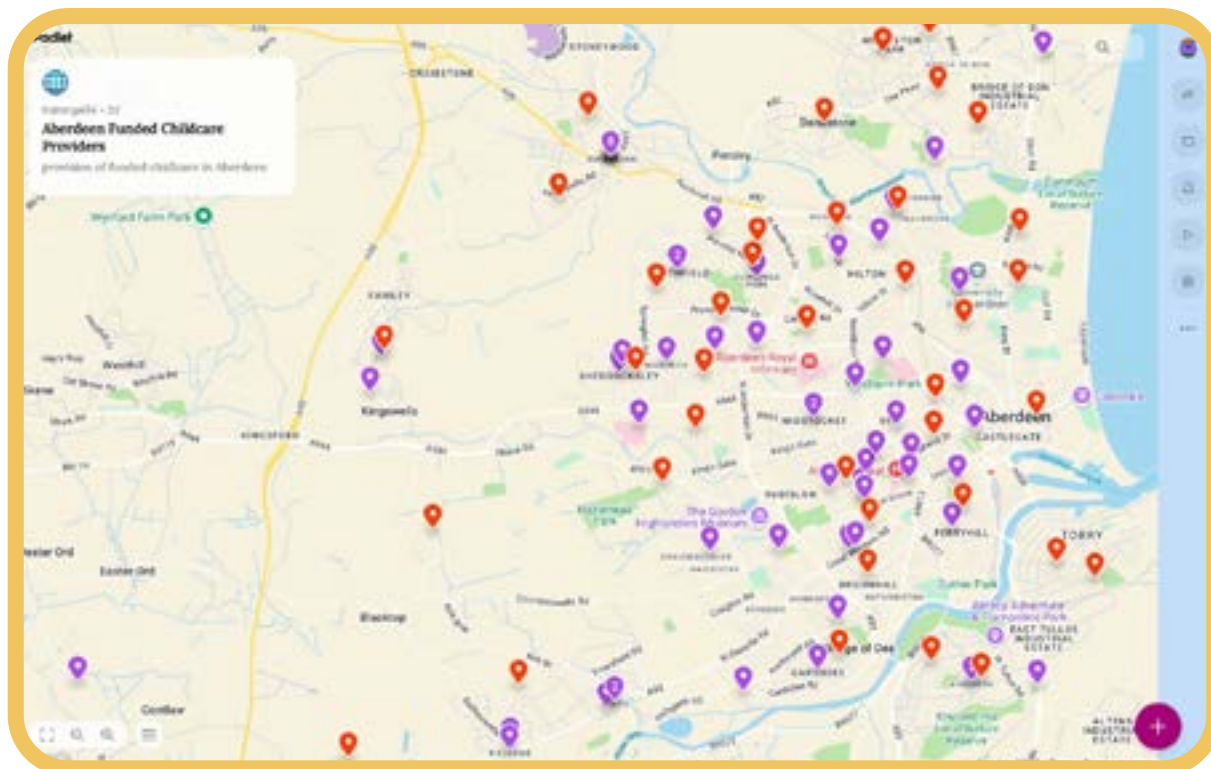
The Steering Group mapped the provision of ELC funded childcare (Map 1), breakfast clubs and school aged childcare (Map 2) and private nurseries and childminders (Map 3) from the information available on the Aberdeen City Council website⁸. The mapping exercise shows there are a number of areas of Aberdeen where there is little or no provision.² This often places an additional burden on women to get childcare in other areas of the city, this can be compounded if they rely on public transport.

“

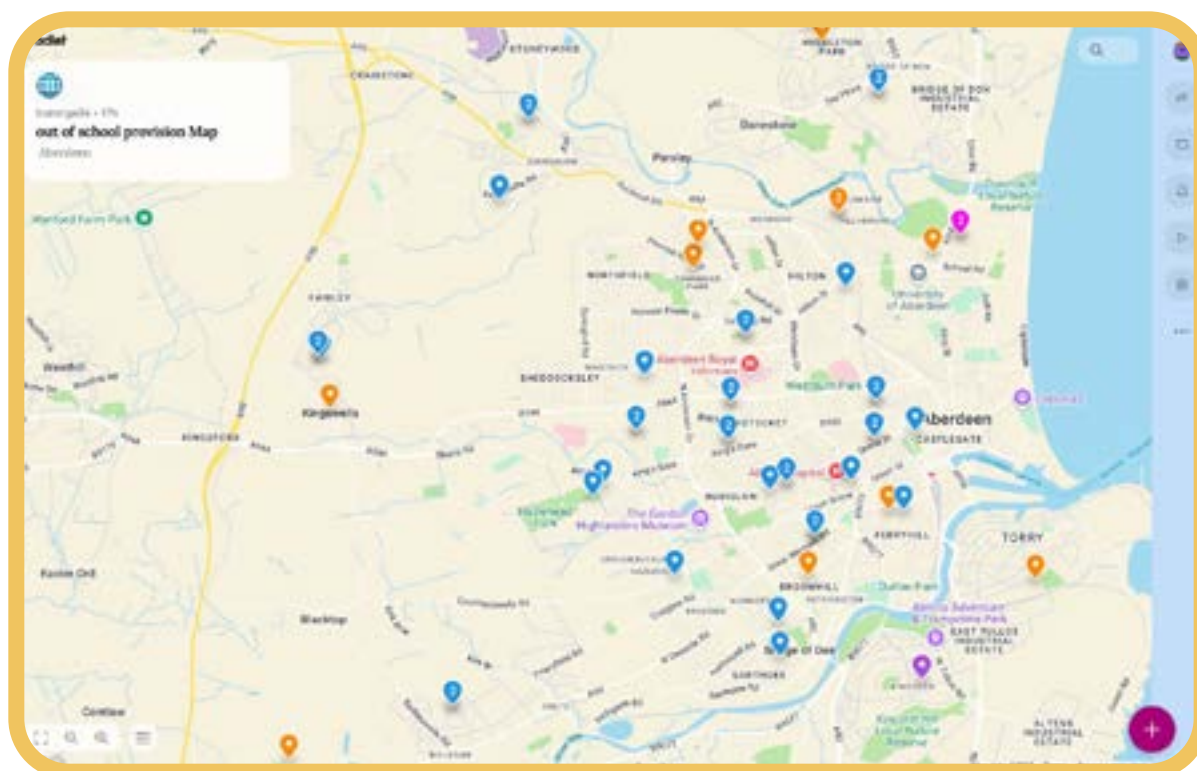
She (my sister) had to leave an hour and a half early for university so that she could drop the bairn off at childcare (as there's nothing in her area) and then head on another bus to the University before having to do the same trip again on the way back. So, buses from Northfield to Rosemount to Garth Dee and then back again.

² [It is worth noting that research from Audit Scotland found that not all childminders who have been approved by councils as ELC partners are in fact delivering funded ELC. Therefore, this map might not be a true reflection of the number of ELC providers available in the city. Source: Early learning and childcare: Progress on delivery of the 1,140 hours expansion | Audit Scotland](#)

Map 1. Funded ELC Providers in Aberdeen

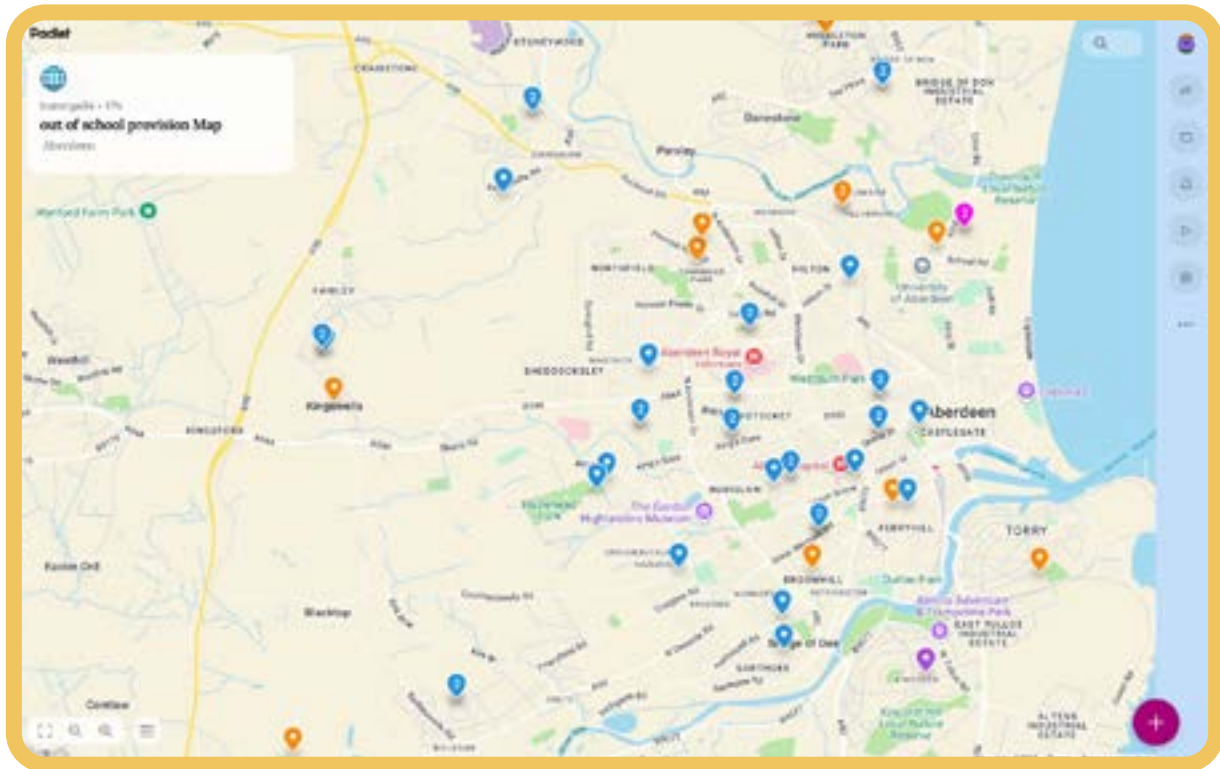


Map 2. School aged childcare provision in Aberdeen (breakfast clubs and after school clubs)



For those with school age children, Map 2 above shows that childcare remains an issue which impacts on women's ability to work and/or increase their hours and therefore boost their income.

Map 3. Private Nursery & Childminder provision in Aberdeen



Women reported that even where there was childcare provided in their area, this could be oversubscribed making it difficult to get their children in. While the provision of school aged childcare is not a statutory responsibility there is a duty to provide this for children in need. Without access to these services women are often restricted to jobs which are available during school hours (which are often in lower paid sectors). This is particularly the case for single parents, parents of disabled children and migrant women.

“

I cannot work as childcare before and after school is expensive and there is no availability.

Recommendations:

- Aberdeen City Council should consider how business support grants could be used to encourage people into childminding. At present grants of £3000 are provided to those who take on business premises. The criteria for this could be amended to support those setting up childminding businesses with support from Business Gateway or the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA).
- Aberdeen City Council should run a campaign highlighting the benefits of flexible working to employers across the city. As well as reviewing its own provision of flexible working options across grades and job roles.

- Aberdeen City Council to support third sector childcare providers with more affordable rents. This could include a further expansion of the Council's concessionary model to support the delivery of more flexible childcare.
- Aberdeen City Council to build on the success of the flexible childcare model being implemented at Cumming Park Nursery and Tillydrone Nursery.
- Aberdeen City Council to ensure health visitors are aware of the criteria for eligible 2 childcare and are able to refer families in who meet the criteria.

School Holidays

The availability and costs of childcare during the school holiday period can be problematic for families, particularly for those on a low income. Those we spoke with reported:

- It was difficult to find appropriate care/activities to cover their working hours, this was particularly true for those with older children and for those with disabled children;
- The cost of holiday childcare can be in the region of **£45** per day;
- Additional logistical issues if the provision is not in their area. This is exacerbated for those who rely on public transport.

Aberdeen City Council provide free holiday activities aimed at the 6 priority groups³ for tackling child poverty, as well as a number of sessions for children with Additional Support Needs. Issues highlighted with these were:

- Age range these are available to;
- Limited numbers which mean they get booked up quickly;
- The need for bookings to be made online;
- The short time period before the holidays to book activities (for holidays starting in July 24, booking opened on 24th June 24 at 12.30pm)⁹;
- The short timeframe they are delivered over, meaning they do not provide an answer to childcare issues low-income families face over the school holidays.

“ *So there might be some full day ones but most of the free activities are just like two hours*

³ As part of its child poverty targets the Scottish Government have identified six priority groups who are at higher risk these are one parent families, minority ethnic families, families with a disabled adult or child, families with a mother under 25, families with a child under one, and families with three or more children.

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to review the provision of free holiday activities. Analyse their data to understand how:

- this provision helps achieve child poverty targets;
- it supports low-income families to manage additional costs during holiday periods;
- meets the duty to provide care for children in need;
- addresses the attainment gap.

Aberdeen City Council to provide alternative booking options beyond online booking, for example, in-person or telephone booking services.

School Aged Childcare

The Council offers discounts on school age childcare. However, the thresholds for those who can access these are based on their Universal Credit payments, which do not appear to take into account changes in October 2023 to the conditionality requirements placed on lone parents by the DWP or on changes to the Real Living Wage. Criteria to access discounts include:

- Universal Credit with a monthly earned income of not more than **£625** (see below);
- Universal Credit, with a single parent/carer working less than 16 hours per week with an annual earned income from employment of less than **£16,105** (see below);
- Universal Credit, with both parents/carers working less than 24 hours per week with an annual earned income from employment of less than **£16,105**.¹⁰

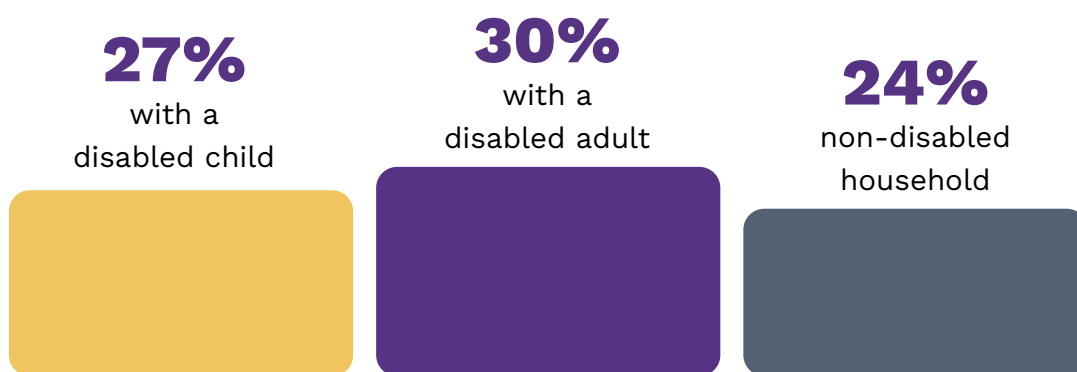
Recommendation:

- Aberdeen City Council to monitor who accesses discounted school aged childcare (through the collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data) to understand who is benefitting from this and how the criteria used helps achieve child poverty targets.
- Aberdeen City Council to review the criteria for accessing discounted school aged care ensuring it is accessible to single parents who receive the Real Living Wage.
- Aberdeen City Council to review the provision of before and after school provision across Aberdeen and work with schools and community and learning centres to identify possible solutions for any gaps identified.

Households with Additional Support Needs

The lack of accessible childcare was a particular barrier for those with disabled children. Disabled households are at increased risk of experiencing poverty and are recognised as one of the **6** priority groups for addressing child poverty.¹¹ The relative poverty rate for children in households with a disabled child was **27%**, compared to **30%** for households with a disabled adult, and **24%** for non-disabled households.¹²

The relative poverty rate



40% of single parent households have a disabled adult or child in the house.¹³ This intersection of sex and disability exacerbates disabled household's experiences of poverty. Caring for a disabled child makes it harder for women to access paid employment and increase household income. According to the latest census there were **855** children under 16 with day to day limiting health conditions living in Aberdeen.

“

It is very hard to get any childcare support apart from the hours at school that my son goes to.



It seems there are some holiday clubs run by council for disabled kids. But they are always pre booked and they have zero opportunity for new enrolments.

Mums also highlighted the issues they experience when their children refused to attend school and the impact this had on them. School attendance rates have been falling in Aberdeen since 2016/17 and in 2023/24 stood at **91.6%**.¹⁴ Figures for persistent non-attendance (where **10%** or more sessions are missed) in Aberdeen are:

Primary	Secondary	Special	All sectors ¹⁵
23.3	33.6	29.9	27.5



I had to give up work as there is no childcare for teenagers who are unable to attend schools as they cannot meet their needs

It's estimated that the impact of school absenteeism and poor relationships on mental health costs the Scottish economy **£8.8 billion** each year.¹⁶

Recommendations:

- Aberdeen City Council should undertake a mapping exercise of the provision for disabled children (0-18) across the City to identify any gaps and develop a plan for addressing these gaps.
- Aberdeen City Council to provide clear accessible information about the childcare support available for families with disabled children.
- Aberdeen City Council to develop early intervention approaches to address school refusal linked to mental health issues. Given the lengthy waiting times for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, support within schools and to those not attending school at an early stage through drop-in services or proactive outreach can prevent things worsening.⁴
- Aberdeen City Council should review transition arrangements and support between P7 and S1 to identify improvements needed to help ensure that young people do not fall out of education at this key point.

⁴ It may be appropriate to use the learning from the model developed by Edinburgh Children's Health Charity ([The Haven](#))

Families with children born as part of a multiple birth event

Parents of multiples (i.e. twins or triplets, etc.) face distinct financial challenges. According to the Twins Trust ‘the financial cost of having multiples is at least £20k more than having two singletons in succession – and families face the cost in one go rather than spreading it out.’¹⁷ Mothers of multiples often experience a reduction in income following the birth of their children, necessitating a decrease in work hours or a complete departure from the workforce. This reduction in income can lead to enduring economic consequences for families, including diminished savings and retirement benefits.

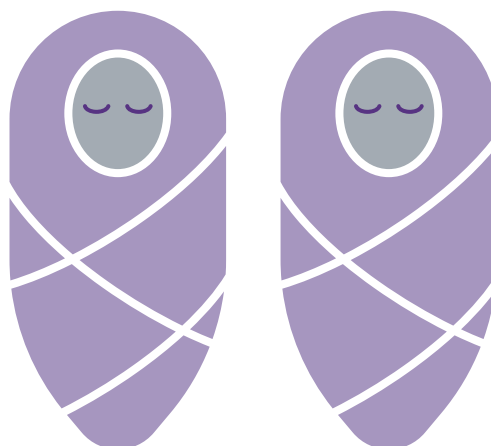
In Aberdeen City, there were **2,092** live births registered in 2023. The % of maternities linked to multiple birth event was **1.48%**, this equates to a total of **31** multiple birth events in that year.¹⁸

“

Having twins was financially stressful. We had double the costs at once. Double nursery fees and no family support.

Recommendation

- Aberdeen City Council to extend the eligibility criteria for 2-year-old funded ELC to provide funded childcare to second and subsequent children born as part of a multiple birth event.



Kinship Care

At all events we attended we spoke with aunties and grans who were kinship carers. As a result of the implementation of The Promise across Scotland, ‘kinship care is now the predominant placement type (approximately **34%**) of all looked after and accommodated children living away from their birth parent(s). There is also a significant number of kinship children residing within kinship arrangements who are not looked after as they are subject to a kinship care order.’¹⁹ A sizeable number of kinship carers reside in areas of financial deprivation and poverty.²⁰

Kinship care can take different forms including:

- **Formal kinship placements** – In these circumstances the child is subject to a legal order (i.e. deemed a looked-after child) via the children’s hearing or is placed with the kinship carer with the consent of the parent(s), under Section 25 Children (Scotland) Act 1995, in recognition that they are not able to keep the child safe.
- **Informal kinship placements** – In these circumstances, the child having been placed by the Local Authority via a formal placement following which the kinship carers have been granted a Kinship Order by the Courts. This removes the child from the looked after system and empowers the family to normalise the care and upbringing of the child.

Kinship carers and families are often faced with a very sudden change of circumstances and responsibilities as a result of a family crisis. While they may have a pre-existing relationship with the child(ren) this does not mean the support needs of the child and the carer are less than for children who go into foster care. The kinship carers we engaged with during this research stated that they often felt that their support needs were not fully recognised, including the financial impact that these caring arrangements had on them.



I’m a kinship carer and part of our groups are like, they’re all grandparents and a lot of them have given up their jobs

Research suggests that **44%** of carers had given up work at the point of becoming a kinship carer, while a further **19%** had reduced their working hours. **80%** reported experiencing financial hardship that was related to their change in circumstances.²¹

Children in kinship care are more likely to be of school age than children in other forms of care – the issues with out of school care highlighted above impact on families providing kinship care. However, the unexpected need to make childcare arrangements or the lack of digital access (majority of kinship carers are grandparents) can amplify these problems.

“

I wanted to keep him in his school with his friends, it was important that we did that, but I don't drive and it was impossible to keep working and keep him there, I couldn't get any help with childcare and my employer wouldn't change my hours.

Recommendations:

- As an employer, Aberdeen City Council should consider ensuring kinship carers can access paid leave and flexible working to support a child/young person moving into their care.
- Aberdeen City Council should review their data to identify the characteristics of, and areas where, kinship carers reside to help understand the wider support needs families may have related to low income.
- Aberdeen City Council to analyse its data on the provision of school age childcare to understand how the duty to provide this is supporting kinship care families and what they can do to improve this.
- Aberdeen City Council to undertake a cost/benefit analysis of paying the Scottish Recommended Allowance versus paying an increased rate.
- Scottish Government to increase the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster and kinship carers which was set in 2023.
- UK Government to bring work capability rules for kinship carers in line with those for foster carers.

Parents of Looked After Children

For mothers of Looked After Children concerns were raised about the impact having children removed from their care had on their financial situation and the practical support they received.

“

Every week, you had to take the kids out, buy food and wherever you were going, it was coming to £100 for the 4 children as I had to see them in different places at different times, I had to borrow from family and friends.

One Parent Families Scotland found that after the removal of a child ‘families can experience material changes to their financial situations impacting on their housing, their employment, their mental health and their ability to stay in safe contact with one

another and have family time.²² The changing financial situation for families can impact on family reunification.

Recommendations:

- Aberdeen City Council to ensure all frontline practitioners are supported to be able to address the financial circumstances of families involved in the care system.
- Aberdeen Council to use discretionary housing benefit to help birth parents to maintain their tenancy and not fall into rent arrears.
- Aberdeen City Council to ensure that as part of putting contact arrangements in place for birth parents, frontline professionals consider the costs involved in this and ensure they are manageable within the families' changed financial circumstances or that support is provided.
- DWP to take into account the requirements for engagement with statutory organisations when children are removed in the conditionality rules placed on parents.

Cost of the School Day

Mums highlighted how the costs associated with children in school impacted on them and their families' finances. These included:

According to CPAG, parents across the UK typically need to find at least £39 per week for a child's secondary school education, and £19 for a primary-aged child.²³



Cost of public transport to get children to school (adult day ticket at the time of the data collection was **£5.30 a day**)



Cost of school uniforms



Cost of school trips/activities and lack of access to grants to support this if women are working.

While the Scottish Government have extended free bus travel for 5-21year olds which is a financial help to families, for children unable to travel on their own the costs of the adult bus fare still must be found and can be a barrier to use the service. In the survey **34%** of single parents told us they struggled with transport costs compared to **24%** for all survey respondents.

Many schools in Aberdeen state on their websites that branded school uniform is not required which is positive. In some the need to wear specific school colours (i.e. green/red) can have an impact on the costs associated with this.

The school clothing grant is a cliff edge benefit, which means the minute people earn a penny over the threshold they lose all access to this. This has a major impact on families who are still on a low income, particularly within the context of the current cost of living crisis.

“

I lost access to the school clothing grant for my 3 kids as a I work in social care and my wage went up, when I asked about it I got told to find a job that paid me 18p an hour less or reduce my hours.

The income threshold for accessing the school clothing grant is slightly higher than the one outlined above for school aged childcare (**£796** a month) but this still does not take into account recent changes to the Real Living Wage or the DWP's conditionality rules.

While schools offer payment plans for P7 trips, those in work and on low incomes still find this unaffordable, particularly when they are already having to make difficult choices to balance their household budgets.

“

My, my boy couldn't go because we cannot afford to pay £300 for a trip.

“

I looked into applying for a grant for a school trip, however I am not eligible due to not being on the right benefits and earning over the threshold.

Recommendations

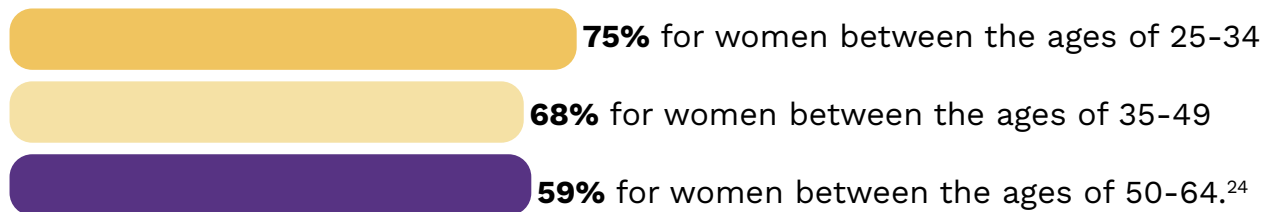
- Aberdeen City Council should review the eligibility criteria for all child related benefits it provides in light of rises in the Real Living Wage and DWP conditionality rules. Additionally, the Council should consider implementing a taper to support families just above the threshold (which is anyone working more than 16 hours and receiving the RLW).
- Aberdeen City Council to consider extending free travel to parents of children who need accompanied to school on public transport by offering a +1 pass similar to that offered with the disabled bus pass.
- Aberdeen City Council to carry out an analysis of Pupil Equity Funding to understand how this has been used to reduce the cost of the school day and develop guidance for schools to support this.
- Aberdeen City Council to ensure all schools operate a pre-loved scheme to encourage the reuse of school uniform to support low-income families as well as reduce waste from school clothing and shoes.
- Aberdeen City Council to ensure schools maximise uptake of School Clothing Grants and Free School Meals by providing information on eligibility for the school clothing grant, payment level and how to apply to parents on a yearly basis.
- Aberdeen City Council to continue to monitor the cost of the school day on a regular basis to identify how families can be supported with this.
- Aberdeen City Council to explore placing financial inclusion workers in associated school groups to ensure that families have access to support in a way that reduces stigma.
- Aberdeen City Council to remove the need for someone to provide a mobile number as well as an email address from the free school meal/school clothing grant application.
- Aberdeen City Council should identify what data they collect which could help identify groups/individuals who are entitled to the School Clothing Grant and who have not applied for it.

Unpaid Care

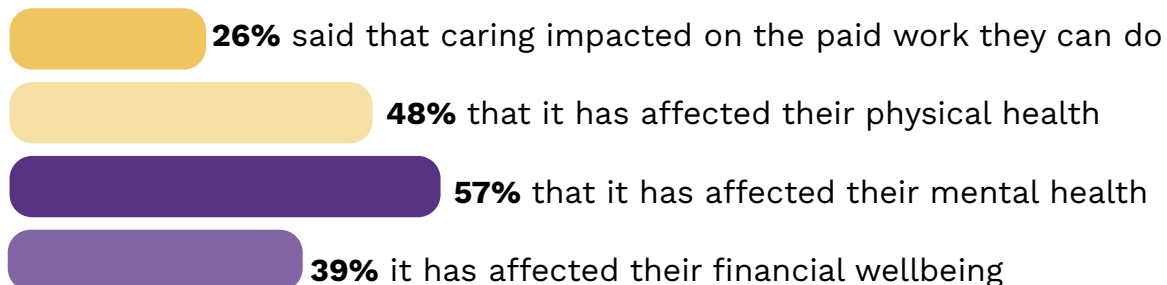
21% of survey respondents looked after someone other than a child under 18. 84% of these were women. 35% of respondents were also caring for children under 18, while 38% considered themselves to have a disability or long-term health condition themselves.

According to the census figures, women make up 59% of those who care for more than 35 hours a week and 60% of those who care for more than 50 hours a week in Aberdeen.

Women between the ages of 25 and 64 care for more than 50 hours a week at higher levels than men:



Those in areas of deprivation tend to spend more time caring. Similarly to childcare, caring for other family members impacts on women's ability to take paid work or to increase their working hours. Survey respondents stated:



“

Between 2015 and 2019 I had to provide more intense care to my adult daughter, which meant that I could not work many hours, which really impacted my ability to keep my career going - ended up having to take low paid precarious jobs. I've not really fully recovered my mental health, life feels really precarious

“

It has taken over my life for the past three years and I have stopped and started working multiple times as his care needs increased. I am left exhausted and unable to concentrate so am currently barely working

Only **9%** of survey respondents cared for someone who received formal social care support. Respondents stated they had been seeking help and had been told that their individual care needs were not serious enough. This means that family members are taking on additional caring responsibilities which can have an impact on the person providing the care. It can also be difficult for the person being cared for (for example, if this changes relationships and family dynamics).

“

Carer for my wife withdrawn as others need greater support.

“

We have been told our needs are not substantial enough.

“

My mums 82 and is giving palliative care to my dad and she has been unable to get support.

Of those who cared for someone who received formal social care support:

39% said this support fully met their needs

22% that it only partly met their needs

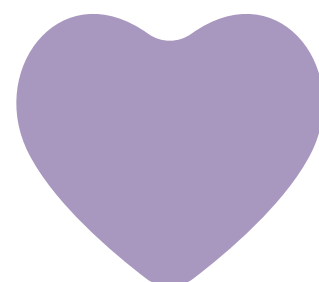
13% they it doesn't meet their needs at all

26% that they haven't been able to access a package of care

The budgetary pressures faced by health and social care partnerships mean unpaid carers are being increasingly relied upon.²⁵ Unmet need is often linked with low-income and poverty, with people in the most deprived areas most likely to be amongst those who feel they need support but are not getting it.²⁶

Scotland has an ageing population with increasingly complex care needs. This means not only that more people are (and will be) caring for children and other family members while trying to hold down paid work but also that the intensity of care will require more time and effort. A recent study published by the University College London indicates that 'sandwich carers' suffer from deterioration in both their mental and physical health. Given increasing economic inactivity rates, more attention and support should be provided for unpaid carers in the city.²⁷

“

Recognition that caring for elders and children together is exhausting and squeezes the life out of us - predominantly middle aged, menopausal women.

Recommendations

- Health & Social Care partnership to use data to identify areas with high levels of unmet need and work with communities to develop responses to support families.
- Aberdeen City Council to allocate sufficient funding to ensure the provision of support to carers as outlined in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.²⁸
- Aberdeen HSCP to ensure their Annual Performance Report provide details of support for carers and/or any other information in relation to the implementation of the Carers Act to improve transparent reporting of impact and spend.

Costs of Social Care

Research by the Fraser of Allander Institute on financial security of those with learning disabilities highlighted that ‘non-residential social care charges have an impact on individuals’ overall sense of financial security.’²⁹ Increases in social care charges risk worsening poverty experienced by households who require care.

Of the **13** people responding to the survey who had social care costs:

1

1 was able to manage the costs fine;

4

4 had to make changes to other areas of spending to manage

3

3 said they struggled to manage the costs

5

5 said they did without care as they could not afford the costs.

According to the census figures there were **18,504** people whose disability limited their day-to-day activities a lot. Of these **10,071 (54%)** were women.³⁰ Where social care charges put people off accessing care, this can disproportionately impact on women as they are more likely to require care and pick up unpaid care roles.

As well as eligibility criteria and costs being a barrier to people accessing care, being able to actually contact the right people was also problematic. Those with care needs who engaged during this project described having to fight for everything, often being told no, and needing to appeal decisions.

“

Each and every one of us had a battle to get the help we needed and if you don't battle you don't get



I have already been assessed to be, you know, to fit the criteria to qualify for a disability benefit, but then to have to go through the whole red tape again by a local authority to either then decide you're not disabled enough, even though a government organisation has decided you are disabled.

There are additional costs to the public sector which come from the challenges that individuals go through while navigating support systems (often due to the siloed approaches used across services). This includes more use of health care and social work services as people hit crisis point earlier than they would otherwise. For example, a disabled woman who was waiting for accessible accommodation was in the meantime being accommodated in a care home and was having difficulty contacting her housing officer to get support to move into the new place. This resulted in the public sector paying for more expensive accommodation and her having reduced independence while in the care home.

Renewing Blue Badges and disabled bus passes were highlighted as processes which caused additional costs if they were not renewed in time. These renewals could be impacted by problems with reassessments for disability-related benefits which can lead to individuals having to pay bus fares for themselves and their companion if one is needed as well as having to pay parking charges.

With people having to navigate multiple systems (Housing, Social Care, NHS, DWP, etc), and these systems not always communicating with each other. The burden falls on the individual to navigate these. When this becomes difficult people can give up which can result in situations escalating and crisis occurring.

Recommendation:

- Aberdeen City Council/Health & Social Care Partnership to consider funding a community navigator role (as piloted by Glasgow Disability Alliance).³¹ Who can work with individuals who require help navigating the care and other systems, helping them to get the appropriate support at the right time.
- Aberdeen City Council to review the process for renewing Blue Badges and bus passes, to reduce the evidence requirements and speed up the time taken for those whose conditions are unlikely to improve.
- Aberdeen City Council to review the criteria for those able to access a Blue Badge to ensure it meets the needs of those with neurological conditions (such as dementia) as well as mobility issues.

Additional Costs for Disabled People

Extra costs for disabled people create what Scope calls a ‘disability price tag’ which means that disabled households need on average **£1,010** more a month to have the same standard of living as a non-disabled household. When the figure is adjusted for inflation for 2023-24 this figure rises to **£1,067** per month³² Scope outlines that these extra costs are built up of the need for specialist disability related products and services, which translates into people needing to spend more on everyday things such as transport, and on essentials such as energy to help manage conditions.

JRF research has highlighted that the poverty rate for disabled people is **30%**, 10 percentage points higher than the rate for people who are not disabled.³³ In addition, **55%** of all Scottish children living in poverty live in a household with a disabled adult or child.³⁴

The cheapest mobility scooter they have was £55 a week, but I only receive £200 a month to cover all my additional costs.

On a limited income, you know, if you’ve got to go to the hospital, if you’ve got to go to the doctors, if you’ve got to go to the opticians or anything like that, you know, potentially a tenner journey into the town for an essential appointment is, you know, a dent in your already limited income.

Recommendations:

- Aberdeen City Council to ensure its non-residential social care charging policy and financial assessment adequately takes into account disability related expenditure.
- Aberdeen City Council to analyse how non-residential social care charges impact on child poverty levels in the City.



Safety

Safety

Violence Against Women

The steering group were clear that domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment at work, in schools and public spaces reinforced gender inequality by limiting women and girls access to education, employment, and other opportunities. Gender inequality therefore sets the underlying context for violence against women.

In Aberdeen in 23/24 Police Scotland recorded 110 incidents of domestic abuse per **10,000** population (slightly below the Scottish average). Over four-in-five incidents (**81%**) of domestic abuse in 2023/24 had a female victim and a male suspected perpetrator.³⁵

In 2017 it was estimated that the economic cost of violence against women in UK was **£66 billion** each year.³⁶ In Aberdeen this would equate to over **£173 million** each year.⁵

“

had 2 jobs and was supporting myself and then I had to move area and give up my jobs to try and get away from my partner, I've found it really hard to find and keep work since.

Women with experience of domestic abuse stated that the choices they had when trying to leave an abusive partner were constrained by their financial situation.

“

Before I decided to leave in my case I thought twice and in the beginning I didn't, as I didn't have any money.

“

Before I could leave I had to wait for the council to tell me if I will have any kind of accommodation, there was no way I could afford to organise a private rent on my own.

This experience is exacerbated for migrant women, particularly if they do not have recourse to public funds (NRPF). ‘Women are more likely than men to be dependent on other immigrants. Women are over two-thirds (**68%**) of migrants on family and dependant visas.’³⁷ Women subject to NRPF with experience of domestic abuse are likely to have dependent children.³⁸

⁵ This estimate is based on Aberdeen, being 3.2% of the Scottish population and Scotland being 8.2% of the UK population

The additional costs women experience when leaving an abusive partner include:

+++++



+++++

- Higher costs of temporary accommodation;
- Costs to obtain alternative permanent accommodation (deposits, decoration costs);
- Storage costs for belongings;
- Costs for rehoming or fostering pets;
- Replacing belongings if unable to safely remove these;
- Loss of income;
- Legal fees.

Recommendations:

- Aberdeen City Council to review the cost of temporary accommodation for women with experience of domestic abuse who are in work and do not qualify for housing benefit.
- Aberdeen City Council to ensure that applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund from survivors of domestic abuse consider the additional costs these households face. The definition of low-income in these cases must be supportive of helping women leave an abusive partner.
- Scottish Government to ensure there is an appropriate level of legal aid provision in Aberdeen.

Feelings of Safety in the Community

Women often experience safety differently than men, with studies showing women feel less safe when using public spaces. Women and girls are socialised from a young age to be fearful in public spaces, leading them to understand that by presenting as female in public space, they are vulnerable to male aggression. As a result, women often engage in unseen ‘safety work’. Other minoritised groups such as members of the LGBT community, those from BME communities and disabled people can also have differing feelings of safety.

39% of all survey respondents said they felt very safe, this reduced for members of the LGBT community to 18% and was higher for men at **54%**.

Table 5. Different feelings of safety broken down for different household groups.

	All	BME households	Disabled people	Single households	Single parents	LGBT people
Very Safe	39%	36%	26%	26%	30%	18%
Somewhat safe	51%	48%	61%	55%	70%	59%
Don't feel safe	10%	16%	13%	19%	0	23%

Table 6. changes to lifestyle/routines men and women have taken due to not feeling safe

Action taken due to not feeling safe	Men	Women
Given up work	3%	4%
Changed plans to meet family/friends	6%	17%
Changed your route home	6%	29%
Gotten off public transport earlier/later than planned	6%	16%
Rely on private car	12%	31%
Changed the way you dress	0%	12%
Moved home	3%	7%
Stopped going places	12%	22%
Avoid leaving the house after certain times	6%	37%
None of the above	63%	33%

Table 7. changes to lifestyle/routines different household groups have taken due to not feeling safe

	All	BME households	Disabled people	Single households	Single parents	LGBT people
Given up work	4%	14%	9%	9%	15%	15%
Changed plans to meet family/friends	15%	23%	24%	20%	31%	15%
Changed your route home	26%	32%	35%	34%	38%	35%
Gotten off public transport earlier/later than planned	15%	14%	25%	17%	23%	20%
Rely on private car	29%	32%	36%	30%	31%	25%
Changed the way you dress	11%	14%	21%	14%	31%	25%
Moved home	7%	14%	12%	6%	23%	10%
Stopped going places	22%	41%	32%	27%	15%	20%
Avoid leaving the house after certain times	34%	27%	61%	41%	31%	40%
None of the above	36%	27%	24%	23%	0%	35%

Street Lighting

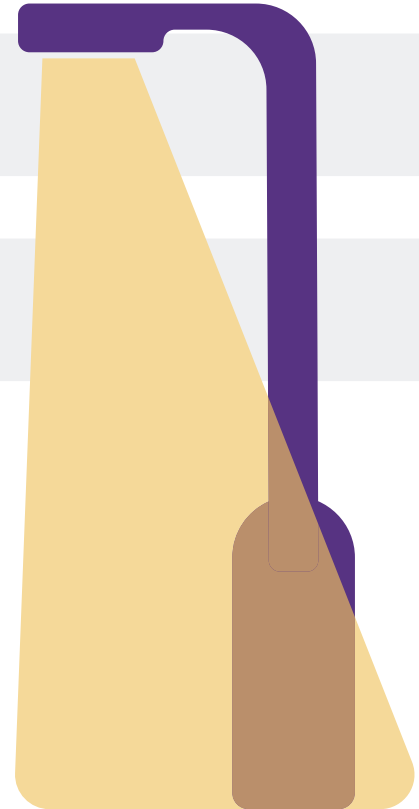
Poor street lighting was identified as one of the key issues affecting women and girls feelings of safety, impacting on whether they go out at night and/or how they travel. Not feeling safe getting to and from bus stops is a major barrier to women seeing public transport as a realistic option. Women were clear that the new LED lighting being used across the city did not provide a level of illumination which helped them to feel safe.

“

The street lights just light up the lamppost

“

The streets are so dark I don't feel safe outside at night



The first mile/last mile problem was clearly highlighted by the young women we spoke with who worked in hospitality. They were clear that for them waiting on Union Street at night for buses and then being dropped off to walk down a dark street was not something they were willing to do. This impacted on the shifts they worked and their use of private cars.

The quality of pavements and maintenance of bushes/hedges was also raised as an area which impacted on women's feelings of safety.

Women highlighted that despite areas of the city being redeveloped, the differing safety perspectives of women did not appear to have been taken into account during the design or the redevelopment phase. For example, Union Terrace (lack of lighting at night), Union Street and the Beach Boulevard (being funnelled into areas that don't feel safe) were all mentioned. It was felt that women's needs were absent from the urban planning being undertaken to redevelop the city.

Recommendation:

- Aberdeen City Council to adopt a feminist urban planning approach, as being developed in Edinburgh and Glasgow and used in other European Cities such as Vienna and Barcelona.
- Aberdeen City Council to embed safety audits/walks of areas being redeveloped or those identified as high risk to improve access/accessibility and to understand issues during different points of the day.

With a large student population in the city the need to ensure safe access to and from university buildings when its dark was highlighted, Seaton Park was highlighted as an area which felt unsafe and resulted in people taking less direct routes.

Respondents highlighted that they felt there was a lack of police presence in local communities. When asked what would support their feelings of safety 54% said greater police presence, **53%** better lighting and **38%** more community projects/events to bring people together.



Police need to be in the community early to get to know and building relationships to impact issues via early intervention not when issues are ingrained in individuals.

The impact of anti-social behaviour on individuals and communities was also raised. Issues highlighted included:

- Fire raising;
- Inappropriate use of motorbikes/off-road bikes;
- Violence and abuse on buses;
- Harassment at taxi ranks (particularly at the casino);
- Drink spiking;
- Lack of taxis;
- CCTV not working;
- High bushes and overgrown hedges;
- Neighbour issues in high rises/flats;
- Door entry systems not working and not being repaired quickly.

Recent research highlights the links between reductions in community-based youth work and policing and a rise in anti-social behaviour driven by deep distrust of the police or the lack of opportunities in their community.^{39 40}

Recommendation:

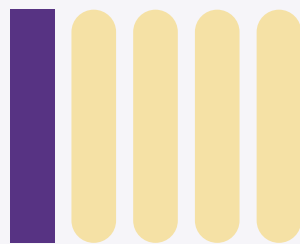
- Aberdeen City Council to review the placement of taxi-ranks.
- Aberdeen City Council to invest in community-based youth work as a preventative measure to fight anti-social behaviour, ensuring young people can participate in a wide range of activities.
- Police Scotland to work with Aberdeen City Council to increase the number of community police across the city to build trust within the community, address issues, and promote safety.

Safety in Education and Workplaces

The young women we spoke with highlighted the everyday nature of sexual harassment they experienced. A small number of mums raised concerns over the level of harassment their children have to deal with in schools in general, and the safety in school particularly in relation to toilets, which they felt was impacting their child's health as well as their education.

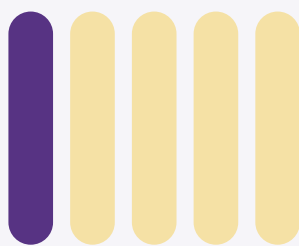
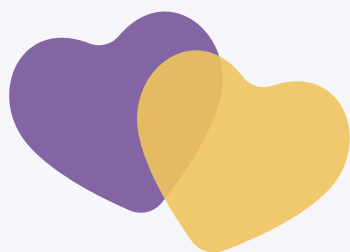
Recent research by the Kings Fund found that 'one in five (**21%**) men aged 16 to 29 who have heard of Andrew Tate⁶ say they have a favourable view of him – three times the share of women in this age group (**7%**) and men aged 30 to 59 (**7%**) who say the same. While among those who say they have heard about Tate's statements on men and women, one in seven (**14%**) agree he raises important points about real threats to male identity and gender roles (**61%** disagree), increasing to three in 10 (**30%**) young men aged 16 to 29'.⁴¹

**ONE in
FIVE**



21% of men aged 16 to 29 who have heard of Andrew Tate⁶ say they have a favourable view of him

⁶ Emory Andrew Tate is a British-American influencer born in 1986. He became worldwide famous for displaying its luxurious lifestyle on social media. He is also famous for his misogynist views about women. Alongside his brother, he has faced allegations of human trafficking both in Romania and the UK, rape and coercive control.



20% of respondents felt there needed to be better education on healthy relationships for young people

20% of respondents felt there needed to be better education on healthy relationships for young people. Recent research suggests that this work needs to start in primary school to tackle deep-rooted attitudes which cause abuse/harassment and inequality.

Further exploration of the issues highlighted above is needed to understand what is needed to address women and girls reduced feelings of safety and how this links to boys/men's behaviour/attitudes.

Recommendation

- Aberdeen City Council to undertake work to ensure teachers and youth workers feel able to address issues associated with the manosphere, porn etc. An early intervention approach which aims to work with boys at the earliest stage possible when they are enacting unhealthy behaviours should be central to this.
- Aberdeen City Council to encourage schools to consider toilet provision particularly for younger year groups. This could include providing toilets only for the use of S1/S2s or taking other innovative approaches to address feelings of safety.



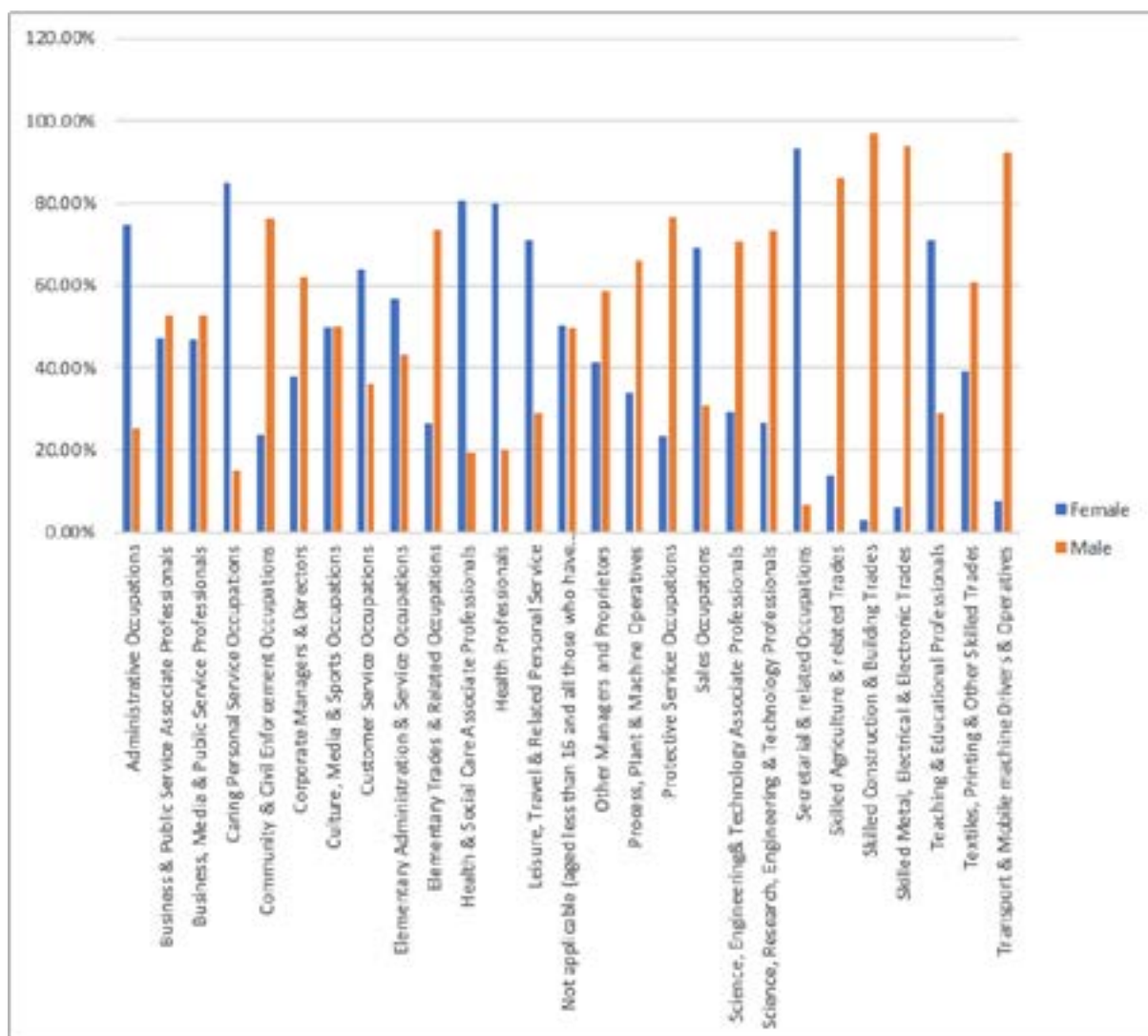
Welfare/ Benefits

WELFARE AND BENEFITS

Low Pay and In-work Poverty

Having paid work is an effective way out of poverty. Families where all adults are in full-time work have a low poverty risk. However, having a job is not always enough. In Aberdeen in 22/23 the percentage of children in poverty was **21.8%**.⁴² It is estimated that over 2021-24 **75%** of children in relative poverty after housing costs were living in working households.⁴³

30% of women in work in Aberdeen work part-time, with women making up **77%** of those who work part time. Child poverty rates are higher in 6 priority families one of which is single parent families.



Women are more likely to work in lower paying sectors such as social care, childcare, administration and hospitality. The graph above shows occupations for men and women based on the census data for Aberdeen.

Recommendations

Aberdeen City Council to review its job evaluation scheme to identify if there are any biases built into this which results in women being in lower paid roles.

Aberdeen City Council to publish Pay Gap data disaggregated for teaching and non-teaching staff.⁷

Aberdeen City Council to publish disaggregated employee data by job type, pay grade, work pattern.

The way work interacts with the benefits system can create a poverty trap for many women which due to lower levels of wealth can be difficult for them to get out of, this is often due to a number of means tested benefits being lost once they go above a certain income level i.e. school clothing grant, carers allowance etc.



I was happy getting my job but then my universal credit went down and now I struggle to repay debt which last year I wasn't in it's a bad feeling I want to pay more but can't.

It is essential that the way different policy areas interact in this area are understood. For example, how does the Scottish Government's drive to pay the Real Living Wage in the care sector, interact with means tested benefits and how does this impact on different groups.

Recommendations:

Aberdeen City Council to carry out an analysis of the eligibility criteria it uses for all grants it provides to understand who this is helping and how these interact within the wider policy context i.e. Real Living Wage, conditionality requirements of DWP etc.

Migrant women can face particular issues associated with the UK's 'hostile environment', which can put limitations on their ability to work.

⁷ Date should be disaggregated by teaching and non-teaching staff, as teachers are more likely to be women and the pay structure within teaching can hide what is happening in other areas.

“

Because the system puts me down and doesn't allow me to work and live as a normal person. Can you imagine working and living in the UK for almost 10 years and having a growing family and not being able to progress your life plans just because of your immigration status? Ah, I have to pay over £3k in visa fees next year, so I can be allowed to stay and live in the UK with my husband and baby! Can you see how this is not normal! I should be spending this money on my baby, on my house, on having a secure plan for life to provide, not in just the right to stay with them! How is this right and fair?

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to gather data on how many of its citizens experience the challenges posed by the UK's 'hostile environment' and work alongside other local authorities and the Scottish Government to lobby the UK Government to create a more compassionate system, putting people's dignity at its core.

Universal Credit

Women we engaged with highlighted the following issues with Universal Credit (UC):

- The level of benefit is not enough to live on particularly in the context of high inflation;
- If women work term time or other non-standard contracts which results in a fluctuating income then UC causes financial issues. This can be particularly challenging if it impacts on housing payments;
- Having to pay childcare costs up front and then having to claim these back;
- The new conditionality rules which require single parents to work at least 30 hours a week or engage with a work coach to address underemployment;
- The household payment can be problematic for women who are living with an abusive partner.

“

Job centre know the days I work but they keep calling me for interviews on the days I work, it's all so stressful.

Recommendations

Aberdeen City Council to continue to provide upfront support with childcare costs to families. Undertake a review of how this grant is advertised to improve uptake and collect disaggregated data on the use of it to monitor impact.

Aberdeen City Council to have easy-to-understand information about entitlement to benefits/support available. This should clearly explain what a low income is (this could be done through the use of case studies) and information should provide for translation into main minority languages.

Aberdeen City Council to make the formula used by the DWP to calculate Universal Credit available to help those with variable incomes.

DWP to ensure they are not calling people who are in work (but who are seen to be underemployed) to meetings during the days/hours they work.

Westminster Government to ensure Universal Credit provides enough income to cover essential expenditure.

Child Maintenance

We heard from a number of mums who had experienced issues with ex-partners supporting their children financially.

“ I don’t know how to afford another pair of shoes for my son and my ex won’t pay any maintenance. ”

“ my ex keeps reducing the amount he’s paying despite the fact he’s just taken on another franchise and bought a new car. The child maintenance system told me I need to prove he has a higher income ”

Participants spoke about how the withholding of child maintenance bears no consequence for the non-resident parent. However, it still has a huge impact on the options and choices open to the resident parent due to the additional costs they have to face on their own i.e. childcare.

As child maintenance payments don’t count towards a family’s income for benefit calculations, working with parents to ensure they are receiving financial support for resident children can be a crucial tool to help improve the financial circumstances of

single-parent families. Yet this can be a complex area to navigate particularly if there are safety considerations as a result of domestic abuse.

The IPPR and Fife Gingerbread project has found that ‘child maintenance, when agreed and paid, can have a genuine anti-child poverty impact. Among children who receive maintenance, the child poverty rate is **30%**, when it would be **40%** without maintenance.’⁴⁴

Recommendations

Aberdeen City Council to ensure all staff dealing with income maximisation have undertaken Fife Gingerbreads Confident Conversations training.

Aberdeen City Council to ensure questions about child maintenance are asked as standard as part of conversations about income maximisation.

Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) provides financial support to people who are in crisis or need help settling into a new home. The Aberdeen City Council website states that the fund is open to:

- are over 16 years old;
- have a low income or do not have access to your money.

While it can be a lifeline to individuals, a small number of survey respondents told us about issues they had experienced with it:

“ *I contacted the Scottish welfare fund a few years ago I got a double bed frame and mattress. The bed frame has now become broken as it's cheaply made unfortunately I contacted them again a few months ago and I haven't heard back. I now resort to lying on my floor and I have a slipped disc in my back which flares up all the time now due to inadequate sleeping.*

“ *We'd contacted them on the Friday afternoon and we were just told there was nothing they could do until Monday. We were sitting with no heating or food for the kids, I contacted my support worker and they helped get me a food parcel and some money for heating.*



I've had to move because of domestic abuse but because I work part time I was told they couldn't help me.



I'm a student and I got told I can't apply.

Data provided by Aberdeen City Council shows that the majority of applicants are White Scottish with **8%** of applicants (for whom data was provided) being from other ethnic groups. The data included a wide range of demographic information from the application. However, it does not provide information on how this data impacts on the successfulness or otherwise of applications.

Recommendations:

Aberdeen City Council to further analyse Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) data to explore how different characteristics impact on the outcome of applications.

Aberdeen City Council to consider how they advertise the SWF particularly to ethnic minority groups in the city.

Aberdeen City Council to provide clearer information about eligibility criteria i.e. what is a low income, what are eligible costs, etc.

Scottish Government to review the Framework agreement for goods supplied via the SWF to ensure quality of goods provided is considered.

Scottish Government to review the guidance provided to local authorities using a gendered lens.

Council Tax

The level of Council Tax and the prospect of further increases was an issue which was highlighted on many occasions. The regressive nature of Council Tax disproportionately impacts low-income households. According to data from the Office of National Statistics, households in the bottom quintile pay **4.6%** of their income on Council Tax, whereas those in the top quintile pay just **1.4%** of their income on this tax.⁴⁵

In comparison to other local authorities across Scotland, Aberdeen has one of the highest council tax payments (for 24/25 band D rates were the fourth highest).⁴⁶ People felt that their council tax was too high and that there was unfairness built into the system due to property values not having been reviewed for some time.

There was a lack of clarity about what individuals received for their Council Tax and a perception that money was not used effectively.

“

Council tax - massively overpriced for no service.

“

I pay over £200 a month for Council Tax it takes up a large proportion of my income as a single woman.

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to consider how it communicates with its citizens about Council Tax and what it funds. As part of budget consultation engage widely with citizens about the Council's priorities and the outcomes they are aiming to achieve, linking this with how Council Tax helps provide this.

Scottish Government to conduct an immediate revaluation of properties across Scotland as an interim step towards the replacement of council tax and launch a timebound process to explore alternative local taxation.

Aberdeen City Council to provide households with the option to pay their council tax over 12 months instead of 10.

Council Tax Reductions

From the survey data collected it appeared that not everyone who lived alone was claiming the 25% single person's council tax reduction. Only **37%** of survey respondents who lived alone said they received this. Comparing the number of households Aberdeen City Council data shows were in receipt of the **25%** council tax reduction in March 2022 (**49,354** accounts this included households with full-time students) to the census data which showed there were **47,523** single households and over **26,000** full time students in the city, further suggests that there is an underclaiming of this benefit.

Low income and disabled households are also able to claim a reduction in council tax. The information on Aberdeen City Councils website about eligibility for the Council Tax Reduction states:

To qualify for Council Tax Reduction, you must:

- Be on a low income, whether benefits or low paid work.
- You (and your partner) don't have more than £16,000 capital or savings, unless you are getting Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit).⁴⁷

The lack of clarity about what a low income is can be a barrier to people claiming this help. When asked about barriers to accessing support, **58%** of survey respondents stated that they did not think they would qualify for help. **12%** of those who did not think they would qualify had household incomes of less than **£10,000** and **30%** had an income of less than £19,999, while **37%** considered themselves to have a disability.

Recommendations:

Aberdeen City Council to provide clearer information on its website about who is entitled to council tax reduction. This should include information on what a low income is (this could be highlighted by case examples).

Aberdeen City Council to run a campaign to encourage take up of single person council tax reduction. Consider using data from housing benefit/electoral register to target households who may be entitled to this.

Aberdeen City Council to make information on circumstances in which they would backdate claims for Council Tax reduction readily available.

Aberdeen City Council to ensure information about reductions for disabled households is accessible and that relevant professionals working with those who would qualify for a reduction on the basis of serious mental impairment are able to provide this information to relevant households.

Council Tax Debt

65% of survey respondents had debt, and of these **17%** had Council Tax arrears. Individuals who had arrears told us about their experiences and how this impacted them:

“

In January I received a letter about Council Tax they said I was due for July and August. They gave me 5 days to pay over £200. I don't even think I'm due this, but if I was I'm a student and a single parent where do they expect me to get this from at such short notice.

“ *I missed one of my monthly payments and they told me I had to pay the remaining amount in one go.*

“ *My account was passed to Scott & Co which has ended up with additional charges. This just penalises those on a low-income.*

The current debt recovery approach, which with one missed payment can spiral rapidly for low-income households, leads to increasing demands and increasing costs that risk pushing low-income families further into poverty.⁴⁸

Recommendations:

Aberdeen City Council to review its practice around council tax arrears, charges and repayment plans for those who fall behind for the current council tax year.

Aberdeen City Council to analyse its data on council tax arrears to understand which households are being affected by its current practices.

Aberdeen City Council to carry out a cost benefit analysis of its debt recovery practices and its use of private debt recovery companies.

Aberdeen City Council to develop debt recovery policies that recognise the impact of domestic and economic abuse and prevent victims being pursued for coerced debt in their name as a result of abuse.

Pensioners

75% of pensioners told us they felt worse off financially than this time last year, with **66%** using their savings to manage household costs in the last year. Concerns about heating and maintaining their homes was particularly significant for this group. Many made comments about the impact of the loss of the Winter Heating Allowance, especially for those who are just above the threshold due to small occupational pensions, who are more likely to be women.

“ *Cost of everything from food to heating etc etc etc has gone up. I am just above the threshold for claiming universal credit or any benefits.*

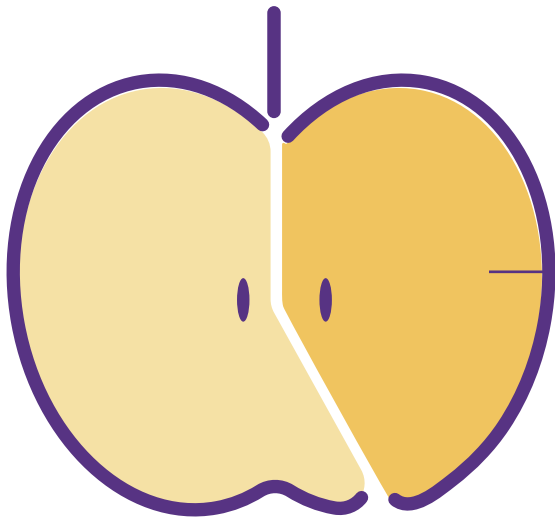
“ *I am now receiving the state pension along with a very small NHS pension. Now having to pay income tax as just above the threshold so have considerable less income than others receiving pension credit*

The thresholds for income based support are a particular issue for these households who are unable to increase their income to manage rising costs.

Recommendations:

Aberdeen City Council to continue to use housing benefit/council tax reduction data to ensure households who may be entitled to Pension Credit are aware of this.

Aberdeen City Council to review threshold for income-based support to understand the costs/benefits of keeping these the same or amending them.



the poorest **10%** eat on average **42%** less fruits and vegetables than recommended

Food Insecurity

General inflation including energy price increases have heightened the risk of low-income households needing to make difficult trade-offs with their food budgets, including choosing how much to spend on heating and food.⁴⁹ As a result, food insecurity is a growing problem for low-income households.

It is estimated that in the UK a **1,000** calories of healthy food (like fruit and vegetables) costs around **£8.80**, while the same amount of less healthy food (like ready meals and processed meats) costs around **£4.30**.⁵⁰ As a result ‘the poorest **10%** eat on average **42%** less fruits and vegetables than recommended, compared to the richest who eat **13%** less’.⁵¹ Food insecurity can lead to poorer health outcomes including increasing the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes.⁵²



Photos from steering group member choice is to help people get good food⁸ or we pay for medication!

“

Bills are a lot higher. You have to buy cheaper quality food.

30% of survey respondents said they were struggling to manage food costs. This increased to **69%** for single parents, **37%** for disabled and single person households and **33%** for BME households.

Women highlighted the different strategies they used to manage food costs, including buying reduced priced foods (yellow stickers, hunting down bargains by visiting different shops to get their messages, using food sharing apps or moving from fresh to frozen food).

“

I know people that feed family just with yellow label products. They know the schedule for all the supermarkets; they are professional hunters.

21% of respondents had skipped meals in the last year and **61%** had cut back on food expenditure.



⁸ Fresh vegetables were purchased from the allotment market stall

“

I've missed some meals to make sure the kids are fed.

“

I know the times that all the shops mark down their food.

12% had used the foodbank to manage costs, while **5%** had joined the community pantry. These respondents were more likely to be from single households or single parent households than from households with more than 2 adults.



24% of those using
foodbanks and joining
community pantries were
employed **full time**



Of these, **24%** were employed full time, the majority had a household income of less than **£29,999**. **49%** received Universal Credit, **60%** were UK nationals the remainder had a range of immigration statuses including having settled status. **55%** considered themselves to have a disability.

Barriers to accessing support from the foodbank or community pantry identified include:

- Stigma/embarrassment/fear;
- Food provided doesn't cater to restricted diets and often isn't culturally appropriate;
- Can be difficult to get to and get goods back if you have restricted mobility or don't have bus fares;
- Don't have the ability to cook/use the food provided (don't have access to cooker or can't afford to run it);
- Doesn't provide support new mums/babies need;
- People don't know what support is available to them;

“

I didn't use the foodbank as I was worried I'd be seen as a bad parent.

“

It's embarrassing. I accessed a foodbank a couple of years ago, but the Scottish Child Payment being introduced helped me to provide food myself. I had to take time off work to go to the foodbank/mobile pantry and lived in constant fear of being seen by someone I knew, especially as we actually raise donations for these sorts of charities at my workplace. However I had no choice as my children needed to eat.

Some mums talked about the guilt they felt at not being able to feed their children the types of food they know they should be eating and the worry they have about the impact this is having on their children's health. Others talked about the strategies they used to ensure their kids had enough food. One participant described this as the 'micro-sacrifices' mums make.

“

Despite living next to the North Sea, the price of fresh fish is outwith my budget.

During the data collection period for this project, the Farmfoods in the Woodside area closed.⁵³ The loss of this shop to the community highlighted how people's access to food is not just about having money to buy the food, but the public transport to get them to the shops and having the money to pay for this.

Recommendations

Aberdeen City Council to pilot a community diner project as developed by Nourish Scotland⁹ to improve health and measure the community benefits of this approach.

Aberdeen City Council to use the development of the local Good Food Nation plan to tackle the experiences of food poverty and build gender analysis into the policy development. The plan should include options to improve access to healthy food, cash first approaches to emergency food aid and supporting communities to use appropriate community space to grow their own vegetables.

Aberdeen City Council to carry out a scoping exercise to see if it's possible to build on the allotment market stall and the Cfine box scheme to get good quality fresh food to communities.

9 Nourish Scotland (2024) Public Diners. The idea whose time has come' [Nourish_Public_Diners_report.pdf](#)

Period Poverty

Access to free sanitary products was seen as something which helped women manage their households' costs. The provision of these across the city was an initiative that was seen to make a difference.



As such it is essential that the products provided meet the needs of a wide range of women. Ensuring suitable products for those who experience heavier periods was highlighted as an area which would increase the impact of this initiative. Black women are more likely to experience heavy menstrual bleeding than white women, as they are more at risk from developing fibroids.⁵⁴

In order to ensure the appropriate use and benefit from these products, it was suggested that as girls hit puberty at younger ages (particularly those from lower-income households) more work is needed to tackle the taboo around menstruation.⁵⁵ Participants stressed that ensuring that girls, their parents and the wider community are well supported is also important. There can be short and long-term health implications from early puberty on women and girls physical and mental health.

Recommendations:

- Aberdeen City Council to ensure that provision of period products meets the needs of women with heavy menstrual bleeding.
- Aberdeen Health & Social Care Partnership to pilot the provision of support to girls and their families who hit puberty early.



Health & Wellbeing

Health & Wellbeing

The steering group identified that it was not just one area or service which impacted on women's lives and their experience of inequality. The way systems were designed and developed and how these interacted with each other causing barriers and hurdles, played an important role in increasing inequality. This included systems/services such as transport, healthcare, maintenance of public spaces and access to support.

Accessing Support

20% of those who completed the survey had tried to access a wide range of support services from the council or other services within the last 12 months. Of these, some successfully accessed help for their finances, repairs to properties or emergency food provision. The majority felt they did not get the help they needed as people did not get back to them, waiting times were too long or they were told they had to speak to someone else.

“

You get pushed from one person to another and nothing ever gets sorted

“

I tried to get support and got told there was an 8-week waiting period, but this was an immigration issue I couldn't wait. I had to scramble about to see who else could help me.

Due to demand outweighing capacity, there are a number of support organisations operating waiting lists in the city.

Respondents were asked if they thought they would be successful in accessing support in the future if they needed this. Only **22%** of respondents felt they would get the help they required.

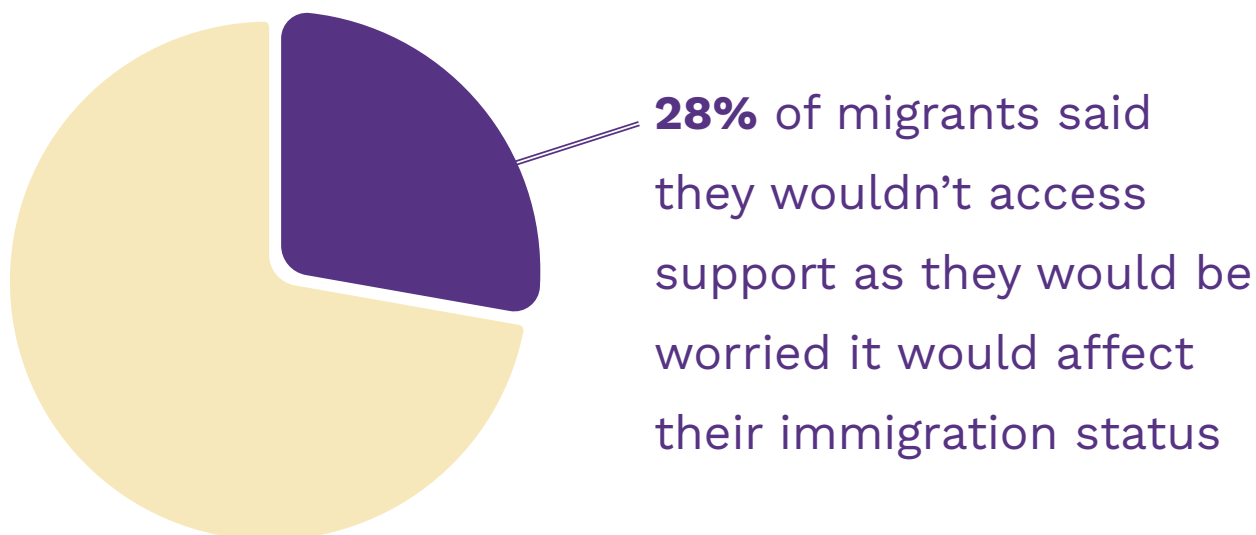
One of the main barriers people felt they would face was not qualifying for help. In relation to this, 58% of respondents thought they would be told no. This, combined with women in particular feeling that others deserve the support more than them, means that the lack of clarity over eligibility criteria for financial support highlighted earlier increases the chances of women self-selecting out and not asking for help.

Table 8. % of women and men who thought these would be barriers to accessing support

Potential Barriers	Women	Men
Didn't think they would qualify	59%	54%
Because they had been told no in the past	28%	22%
Because they think others need the help more than them	37%	19%
Because they don't know where to go for support	13%	22%
Because they don't have digital access	9%	5%

Table 9. % of different household groups who thought these would be barriers to accessing support

Potential Barriers	All	BME households	Single households	Single Parents	Disabled people
Didn't think they would qualify	58%	52%	64%	62%	68%
Because they had been told no in the past	27%	32%	34%	23%	33%
Because they think others need the help more than them	34%	48%	33%	54%	40%
Because they don't know where to go for support	16%	24%	18%	23%	21%
Because they don't have digital access	9%	0%	10%	31%	23%
Don't have the language skills	3%	12%	3%	7%	3%



Participants spoke about how systems and the way information is provided, is based on the assumption that people know about the support they are entitled to and how to access it. This can be particularly challenging for migrants (as things can be very different in the countries they were born in).

Digital Support

Most public authorities have undertaken a shift to services being provided digitally to manage budgets and increase efficiencies. This has often been coupled with the closure of local offices and a reduction in face-to-face support. Audit Scotland found that Covid 19 had accelerated the use of digital technology but that this had been developed without citizens at its heart and that there had been limited involvement in service design.⁵⁶

We heard from women that they felt the council had become more remote and more difficult to access.

“ *One thing I do find frustrating is accessibility within the local council, access to their services is getting increasingly more difficult, especially for disabled people and especially for people who have additional communication needs. For the deaf community, the hearing impaired community, people with mental health issues, people with neurodivergence, everything is being forced online for easiness or at least inverted comma easiness, because they think it's easier for them, but it's causing more communication barriers for other people.*

An issue identified was that often systems were designed for people to access on a computer or laptop, but for many people digital access is through their phone and if the system is not compatible with this then it becomes impossible for people to use.



Often all I had was my phone and the forms and sites aren't accessible for phones they expect you to have a computer

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to ensure their digital systems can be accessed easily by people using smart phones.

Aberdeen City Council to work with a group of citizens to ensure their website is fully accessible and user friendly and that key information is translated into key minority languages.

There are still citizens and communities that do not have access to an affordable or reliable internet connection, an appropriate device, or the skills to effectively engage with digital public services.⁵⁷ During Covid the Scottish Government provided funding to supply individuals and families with digital access this funding and work has stopped. Yet with the cost-of-living crisis low-income households are thinking about what their essential household costs are, and some are making the decision to cancel broadband and phone packages. Audit Scotland estimate that only **8.3%** of eligible households take up social tariffs.⁵⁸

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to promote the availability of social tariffs for Broadband to low-income households.

There are also groups for whom digital approaches do not work. This includes those who have limited literacy and those who need a more relational approach due to trauma.

Recommendations:

Aberdeen City Council to embed citizen participation in service design processes. This needs to be undertaken using a trauma informed and gender lens, to ensure that the complexity of people's lives is built into the design process.

Aberdeen City Council to ensure there are clear non-digital options for people to access support at community level. Embed a no-wrong door approach. So that no matter where someone first asks for help, they will get the support they need.

Accessing Support

16% of survey respondents stated that they didn't think they would be able to access support as they did not know where to go for support.

This increased to **24%** for migrants, with **57%** thinking their ability to understand/speak English would stop them getting the help they need.

The lack of clear and accessible information was problematic for many, and the need to improve communication was suggested by more than **10%** of respondents. Examples given regarding this issue included the Council not communicating with individuals when circumstances change as well as them not communicating with other services or agencies.

“

We received income support for years and it stopped in January when my husband turned 66 my income support and my severe disability payments just stopped, have just found out no rent has been paid either as we have had a letter in about going to court for eviction.

Survey respondents and those at events highlighted the difficulties they experienced. This included:

- Not being able to get past the switchboard when they phone;
- Being directed to a phone in Marischal College and not getting through to anyone;
- Leaving messages and people not getting back to them;
- If situation is complex the number of organisations involved can lead to people having to repeat their stories multiple times. (See picture below which shows the number of agencies four women with experience of domestic abuse had contact with);
- Not knowing your rights and what you are entitled to;
- Being told 'no, that's not us you need to contact someone else' when you do get hold of someone;
- Yearly funding to community organisations makes it difficult to keep up to date with what is being provided at community level;
- Not being able to easily find information on the Council's website.

“ The council are **USELESS** for anyone offline or only marginally online. It has virtually **NO** accessible offices as workers are hiding at home.

“ Sometimes when you're sitting and scrolling on the Aberdeen City Council website it's difficult to find the information.

“ Everything just seems to have barriers and people send you pillar to post.

“ If you don't fit into the flowchart, then you're just going to be waiting here.

The picture above right shows the number of organisations 4 women with experience of domestic abuse came into contact with.

Participants across the community sessions highlighted the need for better collaboration and communication across services. At the moment it is the individual who bears all the responsibility for navigating the different systems. This can feel impossible when people are struggling.



Housing

Housing policies can be a powerful tool to address inequality by ensuring access to safe, stable, and affordable housing, which can improve health, education, and economic outcomes.

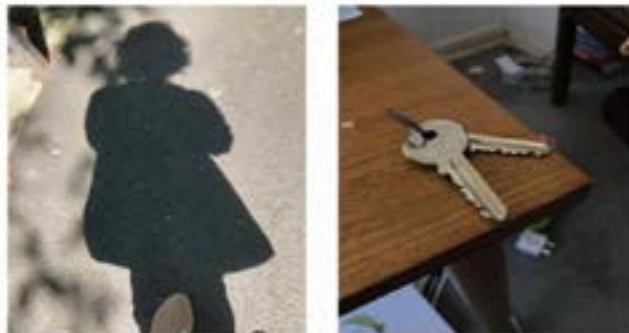


Photo 'getting a new home can be life changing but it can be a financial nightmare.'

Truly affordable housing can free up more income for families to spend on other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and education, all of which can improve their economic stability. Conversely, housing costs can exacerbate women's experiences of poverty.

Women's housing situations rest heavily on their unequal access to resources and safety, whether with respect to pathways into and out of homelessness, as the majority of renters in social housing, or as the minority of homeowners in Scotland.⁵⁹ Higher rates of poverty among women and their greater reliance on social security benefits restricts their access to housing.⁶⁰

According to the Office of National Statistics the average private rent in Aberdeen was **£842** a month in February 2025. The average house price was **£141,000** in January 2025.⁶¹ For private rents this would equate to **30%** of the median salary for women in Aberdeen. For the **30%** of women in Aberdeen who work part-time and the **17%** who are economically inactive these housing costs are unmanageable on their income. Even in 'affordable accommodation' respondents highlighted issues with levels of rent.

“ *Year on year, my Registered Social Landlord keeps putting up my rent and yet, service levels have fallen. It is getting to the stage where I could rent in the private market sector for the same price. My social rent takes an enormous amount out of my monthly budget. Trying to get on the property ladder as a first time buyer is nigh on impossible. I've just received a letter from my RSL indicating that there will be a 7% increase in rent from April 2025. Council Tax is exorbitant for a 2 bedroom flat which I am renting.*

The trends highlighted above on home ownership for women are replicated in those who responded to our survey. **63%** of survey respondents were owner occupiers. This reduces to **31%** for single parents, with **31%** renting privately and **38%** in social housing. Comparatively for men who responded to the survey **70%** are owner occupiers and only 11% are renting in the social rented sector.

Table 10. Type of accommodation by different household groups

	All	BME households	Disabled people	Single households	Single parents
Owner Occupier	63%	52%	52%	59%	31%
Private Let	13%	15%	15%	11%	31%
Social Housing	20%	29%	30%	28%	38%
Other	4%	4%	3%	2%	0

13% of survey respondents were concerned that they may lose their property/tenancy in the next 12 months and 3 (**1%**) respondents were in the process of losing their tenancy. This increased to **21%** and **4%** respectively for respondents from a BME community and **25%** of single parents were worried they may lose their property/tenancy.

Table 11. Suitability of men and women's accommodation

	Women	Men
Fully meets needs	63%	70%
Not enough space	14%	11%
Does not meet their accessibility requirements	7%	5%
Accommodation has mould/damp	17%	8%
Don't live near the services they need	4%	0%

Table 12. Suitability of different household groups accommodation

	All	BME	Disabled people	Single	Single parents
Fully meets needs	63%	28%	51%	64%	38%
Not enough space	13%	44%	12%	0%	31%
Does not meet their accessibility requirements	7%	8%	14%	5%	8%
Don't feel safe	5%	4%	8%	9%	0
Accommodation has mould/damp	16%	40%	18%	12%	31%
Don't live near the services they need	4%	4%	9%	5%	8%

Single parents and people from BME communities were more likely to say they were living in overcrowded situations, while disabled people were more likely to be living in accommodation that does not meet their needs. Living in unsuitable accommodation can impact on individuals physical and mental health as well as their financial stability, worsening health inequalities.

The issues around housing raised by those who engaged included:

- Lack of amenity and accessible housing;
- Lack of transparency in the bidding process leaving women frustrated;
- Lack of housing for larger families;
- Inability to contact housing officer;
- Anti-social behaviour not being addressed;
- Time taken for repairs to be carried out in social housing;
- Being charged for wear and tear repairs by social landlords;
- Costs of 'affordable housing';
- RAAC in properties.

According to the Scottish Housing Regulator at 31st March 2024 Aberdeen City Council owned **23,255** houses, of which **16%** are 4 apartment and **1%** 5 apartments.

Only **45.5%** of Aberdeen City Council tenants who had repairs or maintenance carried out were satisfied with the service they received. It took an average of **237.4** days to relet properties and lost rents sit at **7.9%** of total rent.⁶²

Women spoke about the issues they had getting repairs to their accommodation, for those in social housing time delays, repairs not being carried out properly first time and being told that it is lifestyle issues which are causing damp/mould so 'open a window' where common themes.

Recommendation:

- Aberdeen City Council to analyse their housing and homelessness data with a gender lens. Consider the need for larger properties in its plans to address the Housing Emergency and within its strategic housing investment plan.
- Aberdeen City Council to ensure that their action plan to deal with the housing emergency takes a gendered lens to developing solutions to this issue.
- Increase the supply of affordable/social housing (including releasing empty properties, buy back schemes, buying from private house builders).
- Aberdeen City Council to review its performance for housing repairs to drive improvements.
- UK Government to unfreeze Local Housing Allowance.

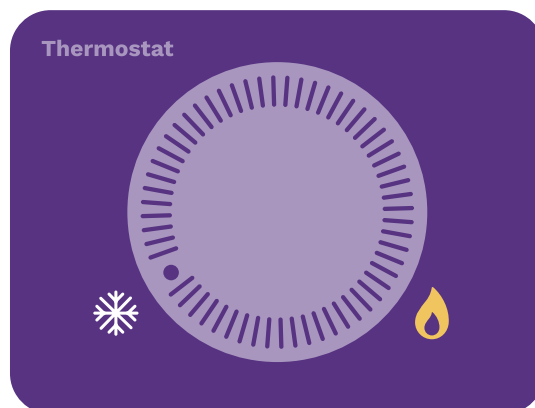


Energy Costs

The spiralling costs of gas and electricity was a major issue raised by the majority of survey respondents. **38%** of people told us they struggled to manage their energy costs. This was the highest proportion across all the costs we asked about.

One of the most common strategies people were using to manage their costs was not putting the heating on (**56%** of respondents). People were putting on extra layers of clothes, using blankets to heat themselves rather than heating their houses or going to public places more often.

One of the most common strategies people were using to manage their costs was not putting the heating on



Data from Aberdeen City Council estimated that extreme fuel poverty rates in Aberdeen are at **13%** and fuel poverty rates at **26%**, and that these rates are increasing. Household data shows that social housing tenants were the highest rate of those in fuel poverty, at **36%**, against **13%** in owner occupied housing and **26%** in private rented housing.⁶³

When asked what could be done to help their households finances, bringing the cost of gas and electricity down, along with food costs, was the most common response.

“

If costs of basic groceries and energy were less, that would improve matters. No one should struggle to live as much as many people have to.

“

Reduction in energy bills, support for cost of living, hope that things will soon improve. But really, what business sense does it make for a company to lower prices when they're making such extortionate profits with no repercussions? It's very disgusting.

Recommendations:

UK Government to urgently ensure social tariffs are available to low-income households

UK Government to nationalise energy distribution and review how the energy markets work to ensure more equitable charges.

Aberdeen City Council to speed up plans to retrofit properties improving energy efficiency for all tenants, reducing the number of social housing tenants in fuel poverty.

Migrant Women

Women with No Recourse to Public Funds are unable access housing support. For those experiencing domestic abuse this can impact on their ability to access safe temporary accommodation and to leave abusive partners.

“

One day when I took that stand and left from my house when I call everybody around they say oh sorry, you have no recourse to public funds, we can't help you.

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to ensure clear up to date information about support available to migrant women and their families in an easily understandable format.

Aberdeen City Council to provide clear guidance to its staff about what support is available including financial help for migrant women.

Aberdeen City Council to ensure staff have appropriate training on domestic abuse, risk and no recourse to public funds.

Scottish Government to ensure there is availability of Legal Aid solicitors to support women with No Recourse to Public Funds to deal with immigration and civil law cases.

Aberdeen City Council have invested **£5.45million**⁶⁴ in the redevelopment of their site for Gypsy/Travellers. While this has improved the living conditions of those who stay on the site, women reported that there are a number of snagging issues and repairs that have been outstanding for over a year including issues with plumbing, drains and vermin. They stressed this was impacting on families' living conditions.

Women staying on the site spoke about their experiences of discrimination. This included being followed in shopping centres, the site being used for fly tipping. They highlighted that because the site postcode is listed as a travelling person's site they have been refused or asked for unaffordable premiums for contents and car insurance.

Access to the site and the ability to get off the site if you do not drive was highlighted as an issue. The road that runs alongside is national speed limit and there are no pavements or accessible bus stops for those who do not drive.

For many women living on the site their income was tied up with that of their partners. If their partners had trouble finding work, then this impacted the families' financial security. Traditional roles in building/construction carried out by men from the Gypsy/Traveller community have been impacted by regulatory changes which require certificates or qualifications. Skills passed on can be difficult to get accredited within current learning pathways.

Recommendation

- Aberdeen City Council to extend the contents insurance cover provided to Council tenants to families staying on the site (or make sure they are aware they can access contents insurance via the council).
- Financial Ombudsman Service to investigate the practices of insurance companies in relation to the Gypsy/Traveller Community.
- Aberdeen City Council to monitor time taken to deal with repairs on site and report on this separately from repairs to general housing stock.
- Aberdeen City Council to consider how access to the site can be improved for non-drivers.

Transport

Affordable, reliable and dependable public transport allows people to access essential opportunities such as paid work, education, shopping, health appointments. Poor public transport infrastructure can negatively impact women to a greater extent as they tend to rely on this more than their male counterparts.



The way in which public transport systems are designed are often problematic for women because they are designed to take people in and out of the city centre for work during peak hours. However, women are more likely to undertake multiple short journeys during the day. Women are also more likely to be reliant on buses for travel.

The availability and accessibility of public transport can have a huge impact on women's ability to undertake paid work. Research has shown that 'some 30 per cent of women have no access to a car particularly during the working day because either they cannot afford one or the family car is used by their partner for work. Except in London, public transport systems tend to be designed on a 'hub and spoke' model focused on the centres of conurbations. This means that a journey to work via school or childcare drop-off might involve several changes and a long commuting time.

In 2022-23 in Scotland at least **£56million** was spent across the country on funding bus travel. Yet many of the women we spoke with in Aberdeen told us that the current public transport system did not meet their needs as:

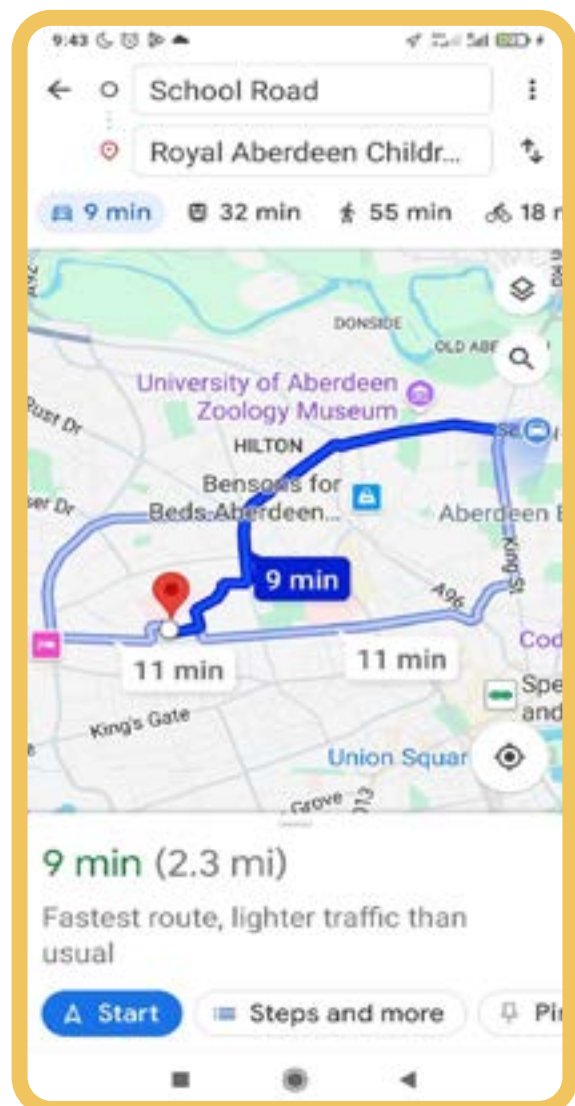
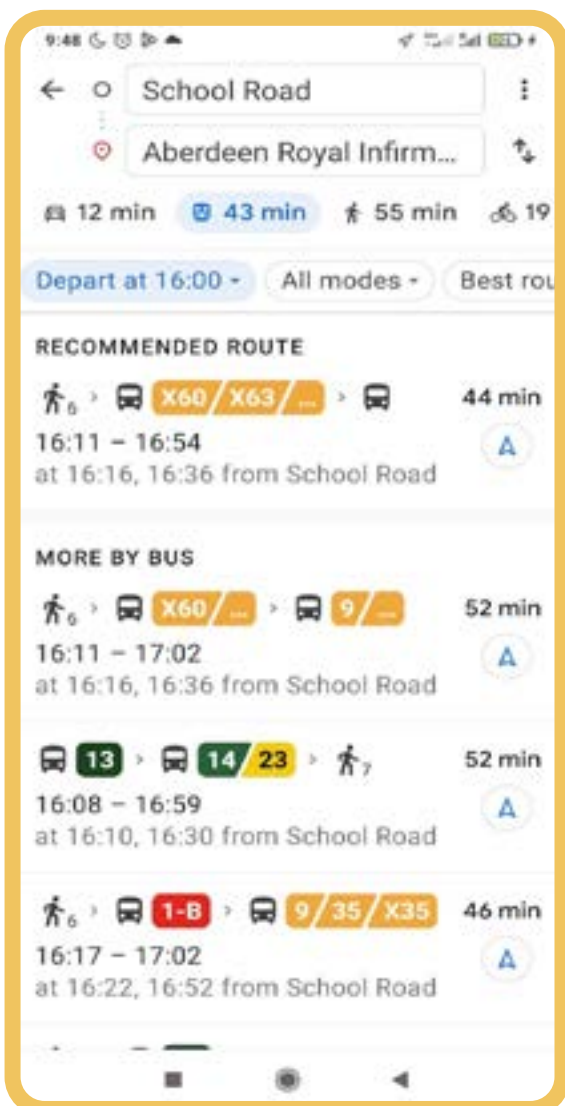
- Buses in Aberdeen are often unreliable, with instances of buses arriving late or not at all. Passengers have reported waiting for extended periods, leading to missed appointments and delays for children going to school;
- There is a lack of adequate night bus services, making it difficult for individuals to return home after events or outings. Many areas are not serviced by night buses, forcing people to rely on taxis or other means of transport including walking;
- Women felt unsafe while using public transport, especially at night and this puts them off going out;
- Passengers often lack clear information about bus schedules and routes, which can lead to confusion and frustration;
- Roadworks and changes to road layouts have complicated travel within the city, leading to further delays and confusion for bus users;
- The cost of public transport can be prohibitive for some users, particularly families.

“ You can’t rely on the buses to get to important appointments, if the first bus is late then this has a knock-on effect to the next bus.

“ I often can’t get on a bus in the morning as they are full, I’m lucky my mum can come and take me.

“ If the buses are late there’s nowhere to sit and I can’t stand for a long time.

As the photos below show for one woman her journey to the children’s hospital would take 9 minutes if she had access to a private car. By public transport because she has to go into the centre then out again it takes over 40 minutes (without any delays).



Transport Costs

24% of survey respondents told us they struggled with transport costs and **33%** said they had to make changes to other areas of household expenditure to manage these costs.

The cost of buses in Aberdeen was seen as extremely expensive. Fares have just risen to **£5.55** for a day ticket. This compares to **£5.90** in Glasgow, **£5.00** in Edinburgh and **£4.65** in Dundee.

For a woman working **5** days a week and earning the median wage, travelling by bus would account for about **4%** of their wage.

One woman told us that the cost and timetabling issues meant they were still reliant on their old non-Low Emission Zone compliant car. Her calculations were:

1 adult weekly first unlimited bus pass (as adult works full-time and travels to work daily) = **£81 a month**

1 adult daily bus ticket for work (as adult works part-time) = £48 per month

= £129 a month

Versus running the car at £181 per month but because of timetable and reliability issues this would involve travel time of **1.5-2** hours daily for the adult working fulltime versus **20/30** minutes in the car and for the other travelling late at night for almost an hour.

“

Child has free bus pass this is a god send as it gives them freedom that they would not have if family had to pay fares



24% of survey respondents told us they struggled with transport costs

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to investigate the viability of replicating the approach taken by Manchester⁶⁵ and Highland Council⁶⁶ which has seen buses taken back under public control.

Scottish Government to pilot their bus fares cap in Aberdeen

Those who qualify for a free bus pass, recognised that this saved them money and helped household finances. However, this is only a benefit if people can access a bus service that meets their needs. As outlined in the safety section, the lack of adequate lighting and the first/last mile of a journey not feeling safe impact on women's use of public transport particularly at night.

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to run a safety survey to identify high priority areas for improvements to support women and other disadvantaged groups' ability to access public transport.⁶⁷

Accessibility

For disabled people travelling by public transport can be more difficult due to the issues highlighted above, which can be exacerbated by:

- Conflicts over space on buses between wheelchair users and parents with prams/ buggies or other people with mobility aids;
- Many buses are not adequately designed for easy access. For instance, some buses have steps, which make it difficult for those with mobility issues to board;
- For those with mobility scooters a permit to travel is required;
- Driver behaviour;
- Bus stops can lack proper seating or shelter, making it uncomfortable for individuals with limited mobility to wait for buses. Many stops are just poles without any seating, which can be particularly challenging for those who need to sit while waiting;
- Additional costs of taxis if it's not possible to do the journey by bus;
- Lack of accessible public toilets;
- Changes with Low Emission Zone, bus gate and works on Union St impacting on where people can be picked up and dropped off and the distance, they then need to go to get to the places they need to be i.e. vaccination centre.

All of these mean that disabled people have to do extra planning to make travelling possible.

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to consider using Low Emission Zone funds to support a taxi card or dial a bus service.

Low Emission Zone

Enforcement of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in Aberdeen started on 1st June 2024. This aims to address air pollution in the city centre caused by road traffic.⁶⁸ While this policy aims to move people from more polluting private transport to public transport, for some the issue highlighted above impacts on how feasible this is. For those from low-income households changing their car to meet the LEZ requirements is not always possible.

Women felt that because of the area covered by the LEZ and the issue with the buses (outlined above) for people trying to get to the train station, bus station or the beach, the LEZ was just forcing them to spend longer periods travelling to get round the zone and get to the places they need to go to.

“

The bus IS amazingly expensive in Aberdeen. And the LEZ zone makes me to lose a lot of time and fuel to reach the train station for my commuting.

“

The LEZ makes it almost impossible for families to get to the beach from the south of the river or the East

Recommendation:

Aberdeen City Council to review the area covered by the LEZ to identify if changes to this are required to make the bus and train stations more accessible.

Aberdeen City Council to analyse exemption data to identify any groups who have been impacted by the introduction of the LEZ and what support they may require to become LEZ compliant i.e. carers (paid and unpaid).

Health

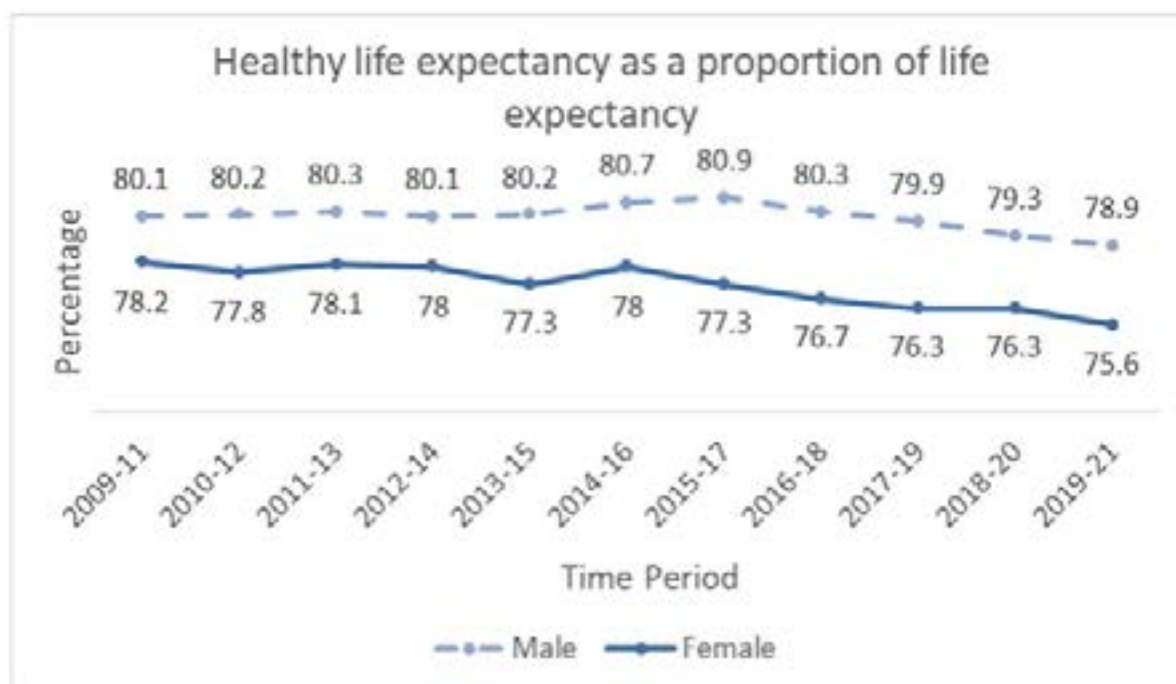
Poor Access to Health Care

Although health is outwith the control of Aberdeen City Council, this issue came up regularly throughout the project. Lack of access to

appropriate health care had a substantial impact on many of the women we spoke to.

In 2021 the Scottish Government published a Women's Health Plan which was underpinned by the acknowledgement that women face particular health inequalities and, in some cases, disadvantages because they are women.⁶⁹ Women too often struggle to access basic healthcare and too often opportunities are missed to ask the right questions to prevent illness.

This impacts on women's quality of life, their ability to undertake paid work and the amount of time they live with poor health. The chart below shows that while women tend to live longer than men, they experience ill health for a greater proportion of their life than men.⁷⁰



The photos below highlight the experience of accessing health care for women who engaged with us as part of this project. Terms like medical gaslighting were used regularly at the sessions we held to describe how women felt they were treated by health professionals. The way in which gender stereotypes impact on women's experience of health care was spoken about regularly. This includes:

- not being believed about levels of pain;
- being expected just to get on with it;
- being told any issues were due to menopause/hormones (depending on the life stage of the woman);
- failure to get the correct diagnosis this ranged from heart issues to neurodivergence.



For women in Scotland the economic inactivity rate has consistently been above the inactivity rate for men. Between October 2023 to September 2024 the rate for women was **25.9%**, while for men this was **20.7%**. The main reason for economic inactivity is long-term sickness or being disabled with **33.5%** stating this was the reason behind their inactivity.⁷¹

A young woman we spoke with told us that she had been referred to gynaecological services for treatment. She has been told it will take over 2 years to be seen. When she asked about mental health support to help her manage her condition while she waited, she was told there was no support. She was expected to manage the impact her physical symptoms were having on her mental health and her ability to manage work and studies on her own.

Access to health care has been shown to have an impact on economic activity rates. When people are not able to access the health services they need. This increases the risk of them experiencing longer term poor health and economic instability.⁷²

Migrant Women's Access to Health Care

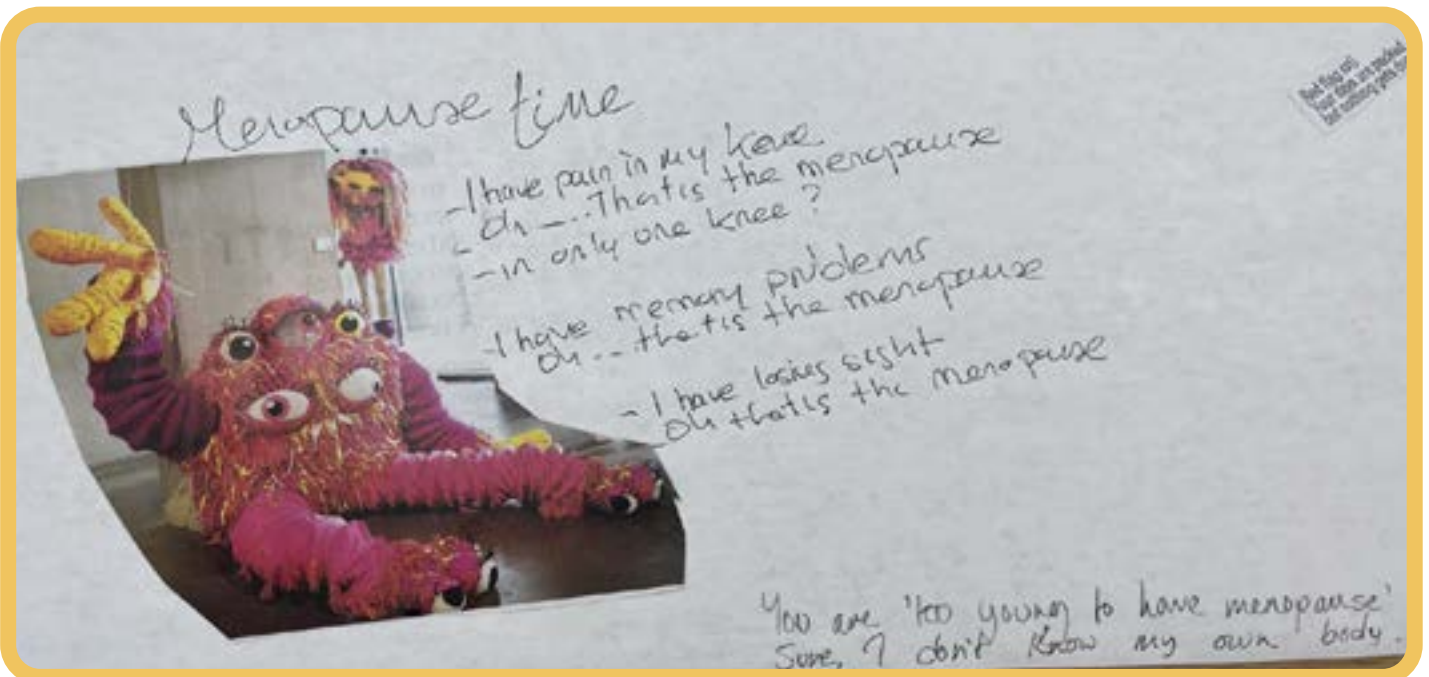
Some people from overseas are required to pay an Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). This is a fee paid by migrant residents in the UK for more than six months to access NHS services. The fee is currently **£776** for under 18s and **£1035** per year for over 18s.⁷³

“

We pay so much health charges when we came here, like everything But we don't get equal rights for our kids, even no child payments, nothing in case of some circumstances, because I know everybody don't need help if we are paying.

Recommendation:

In light of increases in health expenditure through the Scottish budget, local authorities and health boards need to work together to improve outcomes for women. With increasing rates of economic inactivity amongst women due to poor health, greater attention should be paid to ensuring women's health needs are met.





Conclusion

Conclusion

“

You know, women, if we're broken, then so is society and so are the communities, because if we're broken, who's going to keep the backbone of the community going

Focus Group Participant

This report sets out how women's everyday experiences in Aberdeen are affected by gender inequality and what can be done to tackle the systemic barriers which are built into our systems to make life fairer for women in Aberdeen.

Women's poverty and inequality are deeply rooted in systemic and structural issues, requiring solutions that address societal norms and economic structures to achieve gender equality. Women's caring responsibilities often impact on their involvement in the labour market. This results in economic inequality which reduces women's financial independence, restricting their life choices.



Recognising that women and men experience the world differently and face different economic realities and challenges is hugely important if we are to tackle these deep-rooted issues. Women's experiences of inequality are further complicated by intersecting factors, such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status, which can lead to multiple forms of discrimination.

To overcome these issues, and as set out in the recommendations, it's vital that there is an understanding that the way services are delivered, how budgets are set

and used, and how systems interact with each other can either exacerbate or address inequality. How the council collects and uses data to understand how their policies are impacting on its citizens and how implementation is achieving its priorities needs to be at the heart of how it does business. There needs to be a move away from talking about people to understanding different people's needs. Better use of disaggregated data can only help elected members and officers to prioritise limited resources.

Women's poverty and inequality are deeply rooted in systemic and structural issues, requiring solutions that address societal norms and economic structures to achieve gender equality

Increasing transparency and improving communication is fundamental. Ensuring participation and truly working in partnership with communities (both geographical and of interests) is central to achieving the transformational change needed to address gender inequality and inequality more widely.

It is essential that Aberdeen City Council take a gendered lens to service design and budget setting while using sex disaggregated data to monitor the impact of their decisions, if they want to achieve a more gender equal city particularly in these difficult financial times.

A final overarching recommendation is for Aberdeen City Council to ensure those in decision making roles clearly understand that the way in which money is raised and spent is not a gender-neutral process. Any decisions taken at the Council level can drive work forward to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and poverty or make life harder for women and other disadvantaged groups.

Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful to all who participated in this project taking the time to complete the survey or speaking to us at events and sharing their experiences.

This work would not have been possible without the willingness of the steering group members to share their knowledge, experiences and skills. Our thanks go to all who participated in the steering group including:

- Natasha Franklin;
- Sarah Trainer;
- Kritika Gupta;
- Samara McIntyre;
- Jen Macrae;
- Sahar Abdulla;
- Arantxa Garcia De Sola;
- Jacqueline Westland.

Without the support of the organisations already doing amazing work to address inequality and poverty in Aberdeen we would not have been able to gather the depth of information that has informed this work. Our thanks go to:

- The Cfine lived experience group along with Sean and Will;
- Lucy and Katie and the team at SHMU;
- Aileen and Sandra at Grampian Women's Aid;
- Shirell at MECOPP;
- Claire at Woodside Fountain Centre;
- Paul at Inchgarth Community Centre;
- Lesley at Aberdeen Action on Disability
- Lesley at Woodside Community Centre;
- Jenna from Aberdeen Youth Movement.

As well as all the other organisations and individuals who spoke with us or shared information about the project.

Our thanks also go to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee for funding this work.

Appendix 1

Overview of Recommendations

Aberdeen City Council

To continue:

1. Aberdeen City Council to support third sector childcare providers with more affordable rents. This could include a further expansion of the Council's concessionary model to support the delivery of more flexible childcare.
2. Aberdeen City Council to build on the success of the flexible childcare model being implemented at Cumming Park Nursery and Tillydrone Nursery.
3. Aberdeen City Council to continue to monitor the cost of the school day on a regular basis to identify how families can be supported with this.
4. Aberdeen City Council to continue to provide upfront support with childcare costs to families. Undertake a review of how this grant is advertised to improve uptake and collect disaggregated data on the use of it to monitor impact.
5. Aberdeen City Council to continue to use housing benefit/council tax reduction data to ensure households who may be entitled to Pension Credit are aware of this.

To consider:

6. Aberdeen City Council should consider how business support grants could be used to encourage people into childminding. At present grants of £3000 are provided to those who take on business premises. The criteria for this could be amended to support those setting up childminding businesses with support from Business Gateway or the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA).
7. As an employer, Aberdeen City Council should consider ensuring kinship carers can access paid leave and flexible working to support a child/young person moving into their care.
8. Aberdeen City Council to consider extending free travel to parents of children who need accompanied to school on public transport by offering a +1 pass similar to that offered with the disabled bus pass.
9. Aberdeen City Council/Health & Social Care Partnership to consider funding a community navigator role (as piloted by Glasgow Disability Alliance). Who can work with individuals who require help navigating the care and other systems, helping them to get the appropriate support at the right time.

- 10.** Aberdeen City Council to consider how it communicates with its citizens about Council Tax and what it funds. As part of budget consultation engage widely with citizens about the Council's priorities and the outcomes they are aiming to achieve, linking this with how Council Tax helps provide this.
- 11.** Aberdeen City Council to consider how they advertise the SWF particularly to ethnic minority groups in the city.
- 12.** Aberdeen City Council to consider how access to the site can be improved for non-drivers.
- 13.** Aberdeen City Council to consider using LEZ funds to support a taxi card or dial a bus service.

To do:

- 14.** Aberdeen City Council should run a campaign highlighting the benefits of flexible working to employers across the city. As well as reviewing its own provision of flexible working options across grades and job roles.
- 15.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure health visitors are aware of the criteria for eligible 2 childcare and are able to refer families in who meet the criteria.
- 16.** Aberdeen City Council to provide alternative booking options beyond online booking, for example, in-person or telephone booking services.
- 17.** Aberdeen City Council should undertake a mapping exercise of the provision for disabled children (0-18) across the City to identify any gaps and develop a plan for addressing these gaps.
- 18.** Aberdeen City council to provide clear accessible information about the childcare support available for families with disabled children.
- 19.** Aberdeen City Council to develop early intervention approaches to address school refusal linked to mental health issues. Given the lengthy waiting times for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service, support within schools and to those not attending school at an early stage through drop-in services or proactive outreach can prevent things worsening.
- 20.** Aberdeen City Council to extend the eligibility criteria for 2-year-old funded ELC to provide funded childcare to second and subsequent children born as part of a multiple birth event.

- 21.** Aberdeen City Council to analyse its data on the provision of school age childcare to understand how the duty to provide this is supporting kinship care families and what they can do to improve this.
- 22.** Aberdeen City Council to undertake a cost/benefit analysis of paying the Scottish Recommended Allowance versus paying an increased rate.
- 23.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure all frontline practitioners are supported to be able to address financial circumstances with families involved in the care system.
- 24.** Aberdeen Council to use discretionary housing benefit to help birth parents to maintain their tenancy and not fall into rent arrears.
- 25.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure that as part of putting contact arrangements in place for birth parents, frontline professionals consider the costs involved in this and ensure they are manageable within the families' changed financial circumstances or that support is provided.
- 26.** Aberdeen City Council to carry out an analysis of Pupil Equity Funding to understand how this has been used to reduce the cost of the school day and develop guidance for schools to support this.
- 27.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure all schools operate a pre-loved scheme to encourage the reuse of school uniform to support low-income families as well as reduce waste from school clothing and shoes.
- 28.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure all schools maximise uptake of School Clothing Grants and Free School Meals by providing information on the schools clothing grant eligibility, payment level and how to apply to parents on a yearly basis.
- 29.** Aberdeen City Council to explore placing financial inclusion workers in associated school groups to ensure that families have access to support in a way that reduces stigma.
- 30.** Aberdeen City Council to remove the need for someone to provide a mobile number as well as an email address from the free school meal/school clothing grant application.
- 31.** Aberdeen City Council should identify what data they collect which could help identify groups/individuals who are entitled to the School Clothing Grant and who have not applied for it.
- 32.** Aberdeen City Council to allocate sufficient funding to ensure the provision of support to carers as outlined in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.

- 33.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure its non-residential social care charging policy and financial assessment adequately takes into account disability related expenditure.
- 34.** Aberdeen City Council to analyse how non-residential social care charges impact on child poverty levels in the City.
- 35.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure that applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund from survivors of domestic abuse consider the additional costs these households face. The definition of low-income in these cases must be supportive of helping women leave an abusive partner.
- 36.** Aberdeen City Council to adopt a feminist urban planning approach, as being developed in Edinburgh and Glasgow and used in other European Cities such as Vienna and Barcelona.
- 37.** Aberdeen City Council to embed safety audits/walks of areas being redeveloped or those identified as high risk to improve access/accessibility and to understand issues during different points of the day.
- 38.** Aberdeen City Council to invest in community-based youth work as a preventative measure to fight anti-social behaviour, ensuring young people can participate in a wide range of activities.
- 39.** Aberdeen City Council to undertake work to ensure teachers and youth workers feel able to address issues associated with the manosphere, porn etc. An early intervention approach which aims to work with boys at the earliest stage possible when they are enacting unhealthy behaviours should be central to this
- 40.** Aberdeen City Council to encourage schools to consider toilet provision particularly for younger year groups. This could include providing toilets only for the use of S1/ S2s or taking other innovative approaches to address feelings of safety.
- 41.** Aberdeen City Council to publish Pay Gap data disaggregated for teaching and non-teaching staff.
- 42.** Aberdeen City Council to publish disaggregated employee data by job type, pay grade, work pattern.
- 43.** Aberdeen City Council to carry out an analysis of the eligibility criteria it uses for all grants it provides to understand who this is helping and how these interact within the wider policy context i.e. Real Living Wage, conditionality requirements of DWP etc.
- 44.** Aberdeen City Council to gather data on how many of its citizens experience the challenges posed by the UK's 'hostile environment' and work alongside other local authorities and the Scottish Government to lobby the UK Government to create a more compassionate system, putting people's dignity at its core.

- 45.** Aberdeen City Council to have easy-to-understand information about entitlement to benefits/support available. This should clearly explain what a low income is (this could be done through the use of case studies) and information should provide for translation into main minority languages.
- 46.** Aberdeen City Council to make the formula used by the DWP to calculate Universal Credit available to help those with variable incomes.
- 47.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure all staff dealing with income maximisation have undertaken Fife Gingerbreads Confident Conversations training.
- 48.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure questions about child maintenance are asked as standard as part of conversations about income maximisation.
- 49.** Aberdeen City Council to further analyse Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) data to explore how different characteristics impact on the outcome of applications.
- 50.** Aberdeen City Council to provide households with the option to pay their council tax over 12 months instead of 10.
- 51.** Aberdeen City Council to provide clearer information on its website about who is entitled to council tax reduction. This should include information on what a low income is (this could be highlighted by case examples).
- 52.** Aberdeen City Council to run a campaign to encourage take up of single person council tax reduction. Consider using data from housing benefit/electoral register to target households who may be entitled to this.
- 53.** Aberdeen City Council to make information on circumstances in which they would backdate claims for Council Tax reduction readily available.
- 54.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure information about reductions for disabled households is accessible and that relevant professionals working with those who would qualify for a reduction on the basis of serious mental impairment are able to provide this information to relevant households.
- 55.** Aberdeen City Council to analyse its data on council tax arrears to understand which households are being affected by its current practices.
- 56.** Aberdeen City Council to carry out a cost benefit analysis of its debt recovery practices and its use of private debt recovery companies.
- 57.** Aberdeen City Council to develop debt recovery policies that recognise the impact of domestic and economic abuse and prevent victims being pursued for coerced debt in their name as a result of abuse.

- 58.** Aberdeen City Council to pilot a community diner project as developed by Nourish Scotland to improve health and measure the community benefits of this approach.
- 59.** Aberdeen City Council to use the development of the local Good Food Nation plan to tackle the experiences of food poverty and build gender analysis into the policy development. The plan should include options to improve access to healthy food, cash first approaches to emergency food aid and supporting communities to use appropriate community space to grow their own vegetables.
- 60.** Aberdeen City Council to carry out a scoping exercise to see if it's possible to build on the allotment market stall and the Cfine box scheme to get good quality fresh food to communities.
- 61.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure that provision of period products meets the needs of women with heavy menstrual bleeding
- 62.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure their digital systems can be accessed easily by people using smart phones.
- 63.** Aberdeen City Council to work with group of citizens to ensure their website is fully accessible and user friendly and that key information is translated into key minority languages.
- 64.** Aberdeen City Council to promote the availability of social tariffs for Broadband to low-income households.
- 65.** Aberdeen City Council to embed citizen participation in service design processes. This needs to be undertaken using a trauma informed and gender lens, to ensure that the complexity of people's lives is built into the design process.
- 66.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure there are clear non-digital options for people to access support at community level. Embed a no-wrong door approach to their services. So that no matter where someone first asks for help, they will get the support they need.
- 67.** Aberdeen City Council to analyse their housing and homelessness data with a gender lens. Consider the need for larger properties in its plans to address the Housing Emergency and within its strategic housing investment plan.
- 68.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure that their action plan to deal with the housing emergency takes a gendered lens to developing solutions to this issue.
- 69.** Aberdeen City Council to increase the supply of affordable/social housing (including releasing empty properties, buy back schemes, buying from private house builders).
- 70.** Aberdeen City Council to provide clearer information about eligibility criteria i.e.

what is a low income, what are eligible costs, etc.

- 71.** Aberdeen City Council to speed up plans to retrofit properties improving energy efficiency for all tenants, reducing the number of social housing tenants in fuel poverty.
- 72.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure clear up to date information about support available to migrant women and their families in an easily understandable format.
- 73.** Aberdeen City Council to provide clear guidance to its staff about what support is available including financial help for migrant women.
- 74.** Aberdeen City Council to ensure staff have appropriate training on domestic abuse, risk and no recourse to public funds.
- 75.** Aberdeen City Council to extend the contents insurance cover provided to Council tenants to families staying on the site (or make sure they are aware they can access contents insurance via the council).
- 76.** Aberdeen City Council to monitor time taken to deal with repairs on site and report on this separately from repairs to general housing stock.
- 77.** Aberdeen City Council to investigate the viability of replicating the approach taken by Manchester and Highland Council^[iv] which has seen buses taken back under public control.
- 78.** Aberdeen City Council to run a safety survey to identify high priority areas for improvements to support women and other disadvantaged groups' ability to access public transport.
- 79.** Aberdeen City Council to review the area covered by the LEZ to identify if changes to this are required to make the bus and train stations more accessible.
- 80.** Aberdeen City Council to analyse exemption data to identify any groups who have been impacted by the introduction of the LEZ and what support they may require to become LEZ compliant i.e. carers (paid and unpaid).
- 81.** A final overarching recommendation is for Aberdeen City Council to ensure those in decision making roles clearly understand that the way in which money is raised and spent is not a gender-neutral process. Any decisions taken at the Council level can drive work forward to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and poverty or make life harder for women and other disadvantaged groups

- 82.** Aberdeen City Council to review the provision of free holiday activities. Analyse their data to understand how:
- this provision helps achieve child poverty targets;
 - it supports low-income families to manage additional costs during holiday periods;
 - meets the duty to provide care for children in need;
 - addresses the attainment gap.
- 83.** Aberdeen City Council to monitor who accesses discounted school aged childcare (through the collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data) to understand who is benefitting from this and how the criteria used helps achieve child poverty targets.
- 84.** Aberdeen City Council to review the criteria for accessing discounted school aged care ensuring it is accessible to single parents who receive the Real Living Wage.
- 85.** Aberdeen City Council to review the provision of before and after school provision across Aberdeen and work with schools and community and learning centres to identify possible solutions for any gaps identified.
- 86.** Aberdeen City Council should review transition arrangements and support between P7 and S1 to identify improvements needed to help ensure that young people do not fall out of education at this key point.
- 87.** Aberdeen City Council should review their data to identify the characteristics of, and areas where, kinship carers reside to help understand the wider support needs families may have related to low income.
- 88.** Aberdeen City Council should review the eligibility criteria for all child related benefits it provides in light of rises in the Real Living Wage and DWP conditionality rules. Additionally, the Council should consider implementing a taper to support families just above the threshold (which is anyone working more than 16 hours and receiving the RLW).
- 89.** Aberdeen City Council to review the process for renewing Blue Badges and bus passes, to reduce the evidence requirements and speed up the time taken for those whose conditions are unlikely to improve.
- 90.** Aberdeen City Council to review the criteria for those able to access a Blue Badge to ensure it meets the needs of those with neurological conditions (such as dementia) as well as mobility issues.

- 91.** Aberdeen City Council to review the cost of temporary accommodation for women with experience of domestic abuse who are in work and do not qualify for housing benefit.
- 92.** Aberdeen City Council to review the placement of taxi-ranks.
- 93.** Aberdeen City Council to review its job evaluation scheme to identify if there are any biases built into this which results in women being in lower paid roles.
- 94.** Aberdeen City Council to review its practice around council tax arrears, charges and repayment plans for those who fall behind for the current council tax year.
- 95.** Aberdeen City Council to review threshold for income-based support to understand the costs/benefits of keeping these the same or amending them.
- 96.** Aberdeen City Council to review its performance for housing repairs to drive improvements

Health & Social Care Partnership

- 97.** Health & Social Care Partnership to use data to identify areas with high levels of unmet need (in relation to social care) and work with communities to develop responses to support families.
- 98.** Aberdeen HSCP to ensure their Annual Performance Report provide details of support for carers and/or any other information in relation to the implementation of the Carers Act to improve transparent reporting of impact and spend.
- 99.** Aberdeen Health & Social Care Partnership to pilot the provision of support to girls and their families who hit puberty early.
- 100.** In light of increases in health expenditure through the Scottish budget, local authorities and health boards need to work together to improve outcomes for women. With increasing rates of economic inactivity amongst women due to poor health, greater attention should be paid to ensuring women's health needs are met.

Scottish Government

- 101.** Scottish Government to increase the Scottish Recommended Allowance for foster and kinship carers which was set in 2023.
- 102.** Scottish Government to ensure there is an appropriate level of legal aid provision in Aberdeen.
- 103.** Scottish Government to review the Framework agreement for goods supplied via the SWF to ensure quality of goods provided is considered.

- 104.** Scottish Government to review the guidance provided to local authorities using a gendered lens.
- 105.** Scottish Government to conduct an immediate revaluation of properties across Scotland as an interim step towards the replacement of council tax and launch a timebound process to explore alternative local taxation.
- 106.** Scottish Government to ensure there is availability of Legal Aid solicitors to support women with No Recourse to Public Funds to deal with immigration and civil law cases
- 107.** Scottish Government to pilot their bus fares cap in Aberdeen

UK Government

- 108.** UK Government to bring work capability rules for kinship cares in line with those for foster carers.
- 109.** DWP to take into account the requirements for engagement with statutory organisations when children are removed in the conditionality rules placed on parents.
- 110.** DWP to ensure they are not calling people who are in work (but who are seen to be underemployed) to meetings during the days/hours they work.
- 111.** Westminster Government to ensure Universal Credit provides enough income to cover essential expenditure.
- 112.** UK Government to unfreeze Local Housing Allowance.
- 113.** UK Government to urgently ensure social tariff's are available to low-income households
- 114.** UK Government to nationalise energy distribution and review how the energy markets work to ensure more equitable charges.

Police Scotland

- 115.** Police Scotland to work with Aberdeen City Council to increase the number of community police across the city to build trust within the community, address issues, and promote safety.

Financial Services Ombudsman

- 116.** Financial Service Ombudsman to investigate the practices of insurance companies in relation to the Gypsy/Traveller Community.

Appendix 2

Women Shaping a Fairer future in Aberdeen

For all topic areas we want to find out:

- Do they agree this is an issue that impacts on women in Aberdeen?
- What are the problems that this issue causes for women in Aberdeen?
- How does this issue affect women in Aberdeen?
- What changes could be made to help fix this?

Care

Care can include:

- paid and unpaid care work
- looking after children
- looking after adults
- looking after the home

Possible areas to explore in relation to care include:

- How does the responsibility for care impact on women's ability to do paid work?
- What type of work allows women to manage care responsibilities and how does this impact on women's income?
- How does the cost of childcare or social care affect households' finances?
- How does managing care responsibilities impact on people's health (physical and mental)?
- How does the way childcare/social care is provided in Aberdeen help or make things harder?
- How do other services like transport impact on those who care?

Safety

Safety can include:

- Physical and emotional safety which can impact on
 - How safe you feel using services
 - Feeling safe when you are out in your community
 - Safety in the home

Possible areas to explore in relation to safety include:

- Are there places or activities that don't feel safe to do in Aberdeen?
- How do safety considerations impact on the way we do things?
- How do feelings of safety impact on how women get about the city?
- What can impact on people feeling safe to ask for help from different organisations?
- How does the way services are delivered impact on women feeling safe?

Benefits/Welfare

Benefits and welfare can include:

- financial support people receive on a regular basis i.e. Universal credit, pension credit, Scottish Child payment
- financial support people receive on a one off basis i.e Scottish Welfare fund
- non-financial support people receive

Possible areas to explore in relation to benefits/welfare include:

- How do thresholds to access financial support impact on those on a low income?
- How does stigma impact on people accessing support?

- How does the way support is provided in Aberdeen help or make things harder – getting help in a crisis?
- How does the way support is provided in Aberdeen help or make things harder when you are living on a low income?
- Are there additional costs/issues that affect some groups that don't get recognised i.e. disabled people, single parents?

Health & wellbeing

Health & Wellbeing include:

- All the different things people need to be healthy i.e. a roof over their heads, a social network

Possible areas to explore in relation health and wellbeing include;

- How does access to health services impact on people's ability to work?
- How does accommodation impact on health & wellbeing?
- Are there any specific issues that impact on women in Aberdeen?
- What helps or makes things harder about the way services are delivered in Aberdeen?

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Scottish Women's Budget Group

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	11 June 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Supporting People with the Cost of Living Crisis 2024/25 – Full Year Evaluation
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/131
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Susan Thoms, Fairer Aberdeen and Anti-Poverty Manager
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 3.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a full year evaluation of the outcomes achieved from the Cost of Living Funding allocated for 2024/25.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the outputs and outcomes of the Cost of Living Fund 2024/25.

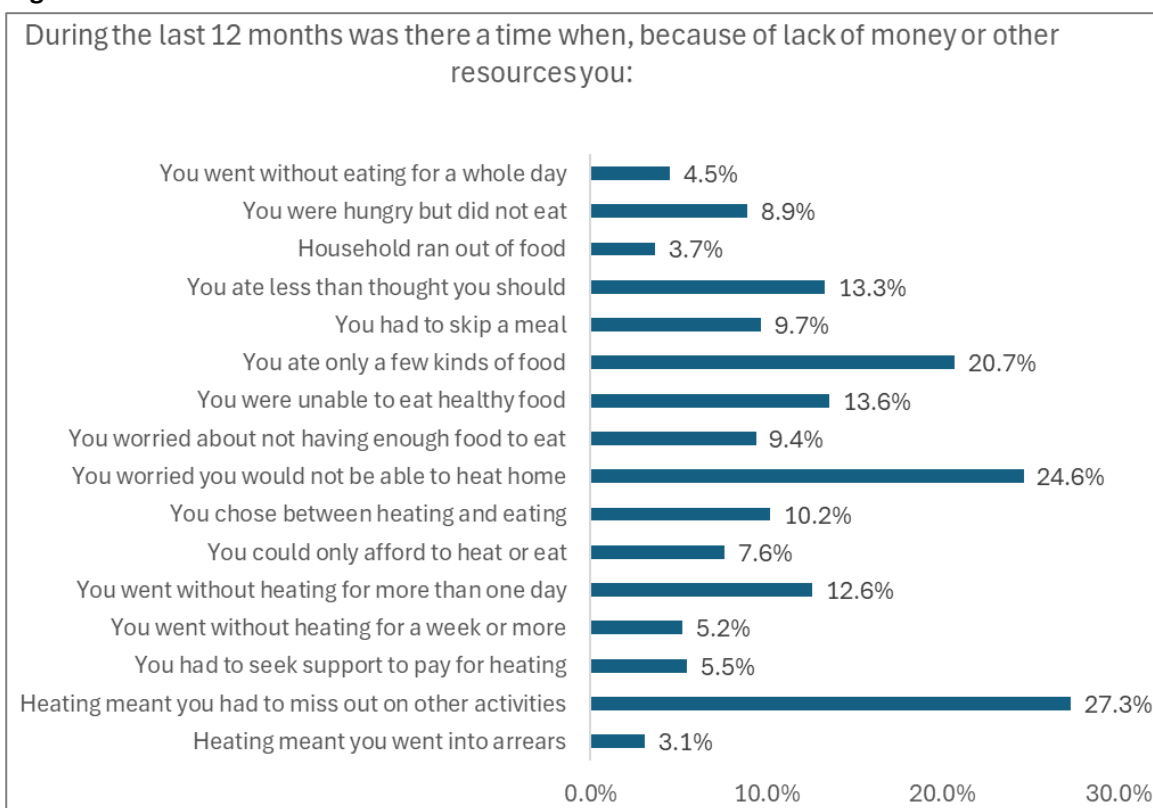
3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Cost of Living Crisis

- 3.1.1 The Aberdeen City [Population Needs Assessment 2024](#) provides an overview of the current cost of living crisis in the City. It states that while all households will be affected by increases in the cost of living it is those with lower incomes and little or no savings who will be most impacted as they spend a higher proportion than average on energy, food and transport and they therefore have less flexibility in their budget to cope with price rises. Research by the Money and Pensions Service (November 2022) suggests that one in six UK adults have no savings and a quarter of UK adults have less than £100 put away. More recent research (January 2023) suggests that as many as one in five adults are borrowing to pay for food and other essential bills, with half doing so for the first time.
- 3.1.2 Research published by the End Child Poverty coalition reported that in 2021/22 an estimated 7,994 children (0-15 years) in Aberdeen City were living in poverty (below 60% median income after housing costs). This is equivalent to 20.5% of children compared to 18.3% in 2020/21.
- 3.1.3 It has been reported nationally that poverty and the cost of living crisis is pushing people to choose between heating and eating. To understand the impact on people and families across the City, questions about food and fuel security have been included in City Voice questionnaires each year since 2018.

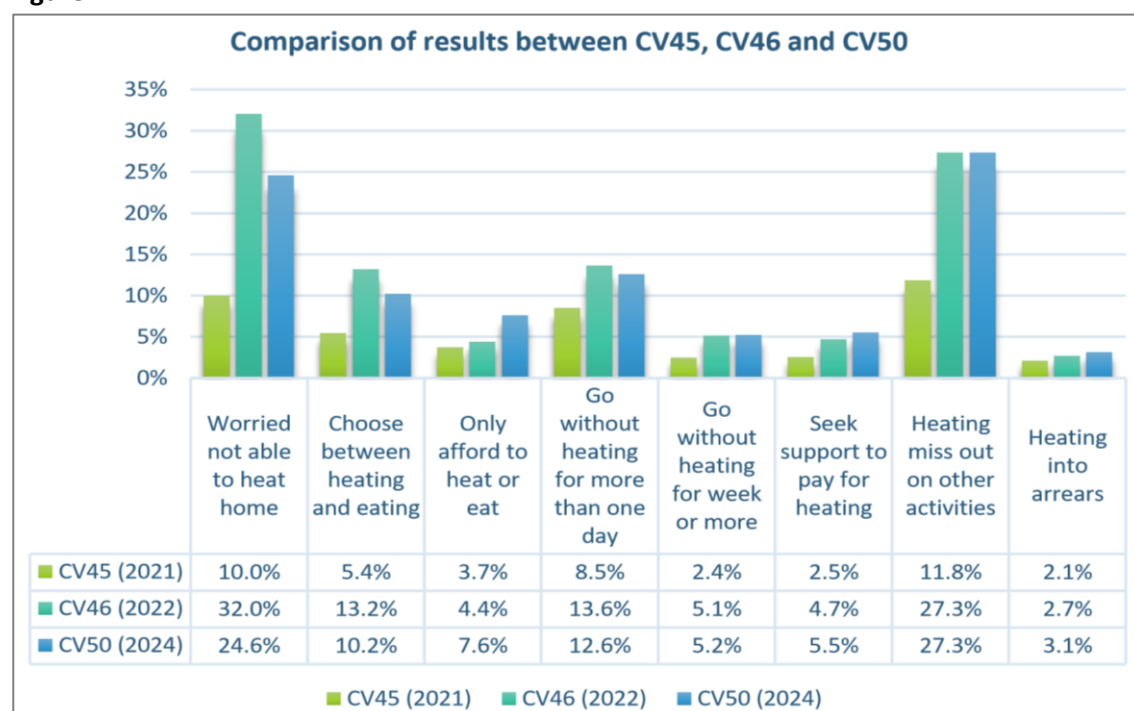
3.1.4 In the latest [City Voice Report published in July 2024](#), participants were asked if during the last 12 months there was a time when, because of lack of money or other resources they had to go without food or fuel or other activities.

Figure 1



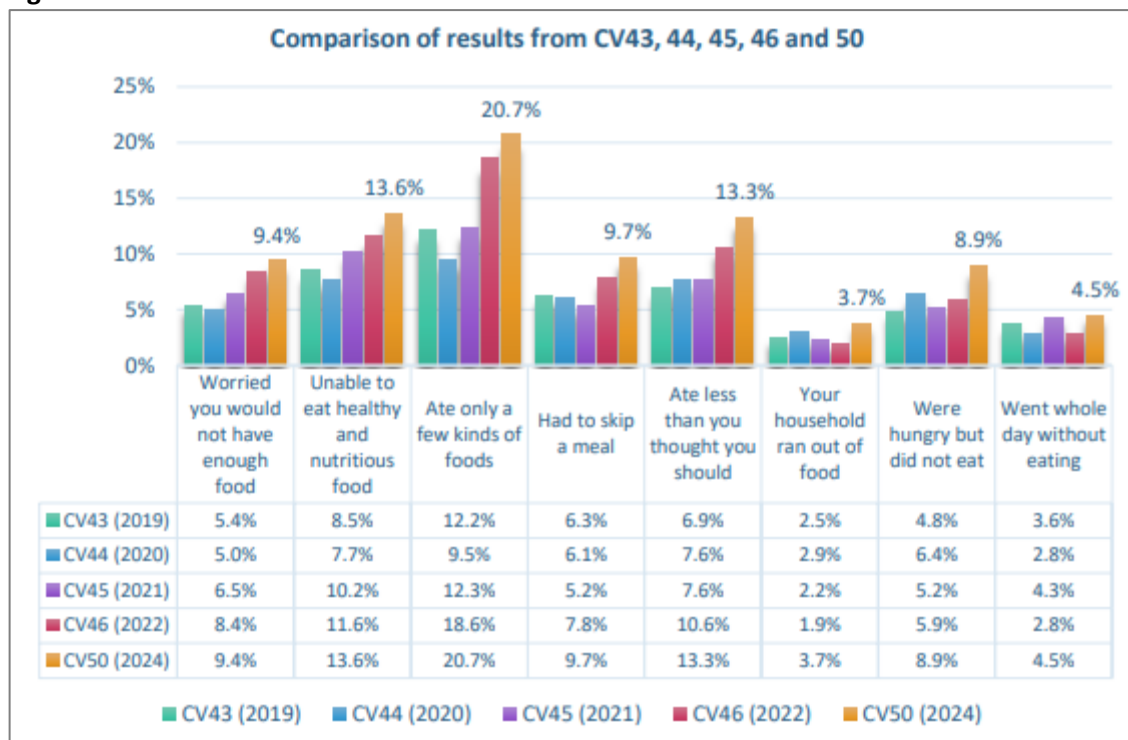
3.1.5 These questions have been asked in previous City Voice questionnaires. The charts below show the proportion of respondents who answered 'yes' to each question.

Figure 2



3.1.6 The chart above shows that with the exception of worried not able to heat their home which has gone down from 32% to 24.6%, the responses in 2024 are broadly similar to those in 2022. The largest increase is in the proportion of respondents who reported being worried they could only afford to heat their home or feed themselves/their family (from 4.4% to 7.6%).

Figure 3



3.1.7 The chart above shows that since the questions were first asked, the percentage of respondents who answered 'yes' has increased for every question. Similarly, since last asked in December 2022, the percentage who answered 'yes' has increased for all questions, with the largest increase being in the proportion who reported they were hungry but did not eat (from 5.9% to 8.9%).

3.1.8 While there has been support for people with the cost of energy, people and families have been affected by the increase in inflation and locally there has been an increase in demand for emergency support. Support to mitigate some of the impacts locally has included:

- Increased financial advice provision
- Increased support through Scottish Welfare Fund
- Procurement of suitable food to increase supply of emergency food
- Provision of fuel vouchers
- Provision of [Warm Spaces](#) during the winter period to alleviate cost of heating homes

3.2 **Supporting People with the Cost of Living Crisis 2024/25**

- 3.2.1 On 6 March 2024, Aberdeen City Council agreed to provide £1 million to mitigate against the ongoing cost of living crisis. Between June and August 2024 the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee agreed recommendations for how this funding should be spent.

Allocation	Organisation	Amount
Round 1 – June 2024		
Food procurement and pantries	Food Poverty Action Aberdeen	£251,260
Fuel	SCARF	£50,000
Poverty Awareness Films	SHMU	£20,000
Discretionary Housing Payments	ACC Revs and Bens	£100,000
School costs (Winter Clothing)*	ACC Revs and Bens	£20,000
Telecare/Tec	ACHSCP	£20,020
Power of Attorney	ACHSCP	£10,000
Childcare Costs	ACC ABZ Works	£60,000
Round 2 - August 2024		
Christmas Family Panto Package for low income families.	Aberdeen Performing Arts	£10,000
Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants/ Community Care Grants	Aberdeen City Council (Revenues and Benefits)	£96,382
Food procurement and pantries	Food Poverty Action Aberdeen	£242,038
Fuel poverty vouchers and advice	SCARF	£80,000
Essentials for underprivileged families	AberNecessities	£40,300

3.3 **Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes**

- 3.3.1 This report provides an update on the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the cost of living the funding 2024/25. A summary is provided overleaf in a logic model format. A logic model helps illustrate the relationships between a program's resources, activities, outputs, and the anticipated outcomes.

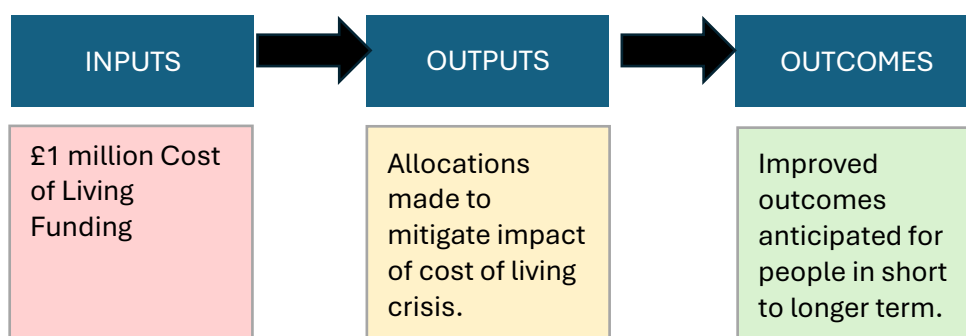


Figure 4 – Summary of inputs, outputs and anticipated outcomes.

INPUTS		OUTPUTS		ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	
What did we invest in to mitigate against the rising cost of living and why?		What have we done so far and who have we reached?		Short term impacts	Longer term impacts
RESPONSE	Food £493,298	The rising cost of living has put pressure on food banks, causing increased demand and falling food donations.	159 tonnes of food, equivalent to 378,480 meals distributed to 85 organisations across the City. 61 people supported through SAFE outreach with £232,490 client financial gain, and 500 weekly pantry shops.	People experiencing food insecurity are able to access good, nutritious food to meet their basic needs.	Food pantries and financial advice can help people break free from poverty by providing additional support that can help prevent future crisis.
	Fuel £130,000	Fuel poverty can have a significant impact on people's mental and physical health over winter.	696 households provided with payment towards their fuel bills and tailored energy efficiency advice. 1,117 onward referrals to appropriate advice/support organisations. 82 households removed from fuel poverty.	People are able to heat their homes over winter to help ensure their general wellbeing.	Better living conditions can contribute to improvement in health outcomes in the long term.
	Crisis Grants £96,382	Without a safety net, unexpected expenses can overwhelm a household, leading to difficulties in meeting basic needs and debt.	1,108 people received a Crisis Grant to provide immediate financial assistance to help them through an emergency situation..	Crisis grants act as a safety net, offering a temporary boost to manage immediate needs in a crisis, preventing further financial hardship.	Can prevent situations from worsening such as homelessness or hunger by providing resources to cope with immediate crisis.
	Family Essentials £40,300	Providing family essentials including food clothing and hygiene products directly mitigates the cost of living.	1,000 families supported with toiletries and cleaning products, 80 pregnant women supported with maternity clothes and hospital bags, 50 families fleeing domestic abuse provided with kitchen items.	Families can redirect their resources to more important expenses and improve their financial stability.	Supports better relationships with public services to provide early help and intervention to enhance children and family wellbeing.
EARLY INTERVENTION	Housing £100,000	There are people that rent their home that get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit but still can't afford their housing costs.	146 claimants supported with shortfall in their local housing allowance or income related, preventing further escalation of harm to people.	People who are having difficulty paying their rent due to financial challenges are supported to prevent going into rent arrears.	Discretionary Housing Payments can help people address financial challenges and achieve housing security.
	Winter clothing £20,000	The rising cost of living can make clothing difficult to afford and children in poverty can suffer not only physically but mentally as a result.	4,381 winter clothing payment awards of £30 made, supporting children to have the clothing they need over winter.	Children and young people are supported to purchase weather-appropriate clothing which removes stress and improves school attendance.	Providing winter clothing to children and young people in poverty can improve their self-esteem, wellbeing and improve test results.
	Family Experiences £10,000	Families experiencing financial hardship can struggle to afford cultural events, which offer valuable enrichment and mental health benefits, due to the cost of living.	67 families provided with a Christmas Panto Package to give them the opportunity to visit the theatre and enjoy the festive panto.	Families can enjoy a positive and enriching experience at a time when expenses tend to rise, helping alleviate the stress of the cost of living.	Cultural experiences can having lasting positive impacts including improved well-being, improved confidence, enhanced social skills, and increased aspirations.
PREVENTION	Telecare £20,020	Telecare helps elderly and disabled people live independently and safely at home. However, digital poverty can impact access to telecare and health services.	1 low income family supported to purchase telecare equipment. Identification of individuals in need ongoing.	Older people and people with disabilities that can't afford telecare are assisted and kept safe in their home over winter when there is a greater risk of harm.	Benefit checks are built into the application process to ensure people receive the support they are entitled to and supported to stay in their homes for longer.
	Power of Attorney £10,000	Lack of Power of Attorney lacks in delayed discharge. This is often due to the cost of putting it in place. 80% of cases are from SIMD 1.	4 low income families living in SIMD 1 that are not eligible for legal aid supported to arrange Power of Attorney. Identification of individuals in need ongoing.	Older people living in Aberdeen's most deprived communities receive financial support with putting in place Power of Attorney.	Reduction in delayed discharges, minimising risk of further infection, loss of mobility and independence.
	Child Care Costs £60,000	Childcare costs can be a significant expense for parents and the cost of living crisis can put some parents off going back to work.	16 families supported with childcare costs enabling 7 parents into employment, 4 parents to stay in employment, and supporting another parent to sustain their education.	Support with childcare costs to help parents get back into work, stay employed and earn more.	Keeping parents in the workforce when their children are young can help generate economic growth and boost the local economy.
	Poverty Awareness £20,000	Raising awareness of poverty is essential to help people understand the effects on individuals and communities and think about how they can help.	4 short films and 3 podcasts produced to raise awareness of challenges for people impacted by poverty, to share widely at events. 5 people trained in podcasting and interview techniques.	Podcasts and short films capturing the lived experience of people in poverty shown during Challenge Poverty Week 2024 to raise awareness.	Increased support from all sectors in reducing stigma, increasing uptake of support available, and working together to prevent poverty,

3.3.2 See Appendix 1 for the full Cost of Living Fund 2024/25 Evaluation Report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Funding of £1m was provided within the 2024-25 budget.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Funds allocated to third parties are subject to Aberdeen City Council's standard terms and conditions.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	There is a risk that failing to support people struggling to meet the increased cost of living could lead to longer term economic harm.	Delivery of measures to help mitigate the cost of living impacts for the most vulnerable, alongside work and support across services, partners and third sector.	L	Yes
Compliance	There is a risk of failing to comply with a Council decision to spend the allocated £1m to help the most vulnerable in our community with energy costs.	Delivery of measures to help mitigate the cost of living impacts for the most vulnerable, alongside work and support across services, partners and third sector.	L	Yes
Operational	The project delivery in this report requires some resource from the Council, but mainly through partners	Strong partnership working with organisations identified will ensure this risk is minimised.	L	Yes

Financial	There is a risk of failing to deliver and spend the approved budget	It is expected that funds will be fully spent by April 2025.	L	Yes
Reputational	There is a risk that failing to support people struggling to meet the cost of living could lead to reputational damage.	The delivery described in this report demonstrates a clear commitment to supporting people with the cost of living.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No environmental risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting People with the Cost of Living Actively support Aberdeen's foodbanks and provide assistance with bulk purchasing where desirable.
Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Stretch outcome 1: 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Stretch outcome 12: Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring with a longer term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer People and Citizens Services on 15 May 2025.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Supporting People with the Cost of Living CORS/24/152](#)

[Supporting People with the Cost of Living Interim Evaluation CORS/24/291](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Cost of Living Fund 2024/25 Evaluation

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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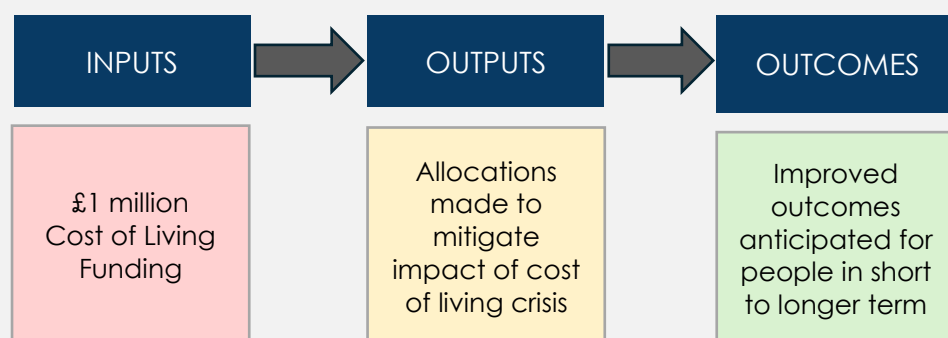
Supporting People with the Cost of Living Crisis

Evaluation 2024-25



In March 2024, Aberdeen City Council agreed to provide £1m to mitigate against the ongoing cost of living crisis. During 2024-25 the Council's Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee agreed recommendations on how this funding should be spent to support people.

While all households will be affected by increases in the cost of living, national and local data shows it is those with lower incomes and little to no savings who will be most impacted as they spend a higher proportion than average on energy and food, and therefore have less flexibility in their budget to cope with price rises.



In **response** to the crisis, funding was allocated to provide food, to ensure people experiencing food insecurity are able to access good, nutritious food to meet their needs; and fuel, to ensure people are able to heat their homes over winter. Funding was also allocated to provide additional Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants, and essentials for children and families.

Taking **early intervention** action, funding was allocated to support food pantries and provide financial advice, to support people on benefits who can't afford their housing costs, to provide winter clothing to ensure children have the clothing they need during cold weather, and provision for low income families to attend a pantomime at Christmas

With a **prevention** approach, funding was allocated to support elderly and disabled people to live independently and safely at home, to reduce delayed discharges for people ready to go home, to provide childcare costs for parents to get back into work, and to raise awareness of poverty to help people understand the effects on individuals and communities.

My priority was to keep myself safe with a roof over my head

Thank you for enabling me to have a decent quality of life!

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7.6% of respondents reported they could only afford to heat their home or feed themselves.

8.9% of respondents were hungry but did not eat.

13.6% of respondents were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food.

13.3% of respondents ate less than they thought they should.

24.6% of respondents were worried they would not be able to heat their home.

12.6% of respondents went without heating for more than one day.

Aberdeen City Voice July 2024

£1m invested

21,013 people supported

159 tonnes of food distributed equivalent of **378,480** meals

61 people receiving financial advice

£232,490 client financial gain

696 households receiving payments to help with fuel bills

82 households removed from fuel poverty

1,108 people receiving a Crisis Grant

80 pregnant women receiving maternity clothes and hospital bags

146 people supported with discretionary housing payments

4,381 children receiving winter clothes

300 families and children provided with a Christmas panto package

7 parents supported into employment

4 poverty awareness films produced

4 families supported to arrange Power of Attorney



Food Poverty Action Aberdeen

159 tonnes of food distributed
378,480 equivalent number of meals
85 partners distributed to
500 pantry weekly shops
159 tins of infant formula provided
61 people receiving financial advice through outreach sessions
9 organisations receiving outreach support
£232,490 total client financial gain
9,836 people supported

£493,298 was allocated to Food Poverty Action Aberdeen, a partnership of organisations providing support to people experiencing food insecurity. This has been used by CFINE to procure and distribute food to partners throughout the city. The purchased food supplemented the existing distribution of surplus food accessed through the food industry.

Free pantry memberships were provided to increase the number of people benefiting from the community pantries. Pantries offer a dignified alternative to emergency food provision, providing increased choice and access to wrap-around services, including the SAFE Team. Funding also supported outreach financial advice from CFINE's SAFE Team, to prioritise early intervention and prevention by providing person-centred wrap-around services which tackle underlying reasons that can lead someone to request emergency food.

CFINE is the lead partner of Food Poverty Action Aberdeen and FareShare Regional Centre covering the city. During 2024-25 CFINE used its existing contacts and agreements with suppliers to successfully procure large quantities of non-perishable ambient food. To maximise value for money, the food was procured wholesale in bulk by the lorry load (26 pallets at a time). The food was then processed, ensuring it was

logged correctly on CFINE's bespoke warehouse management system, meaning full traceability of all products.

The food was distributed throughout CFINE's network of Community Food Members in the City, provided in mixed pallet form, or in smaller quantities based on individual organisations capacity/storage. CFINE continued to gather feedback from Community Food Members and adjusted the types of products purchased based on the needs of our partners.

During the funding period, demand for emergency food continued to be extremely high. CFINE's own food bank alone regularly distributed in excess of 4,000 food parcels per month, figures not seen since the height of the Covid19 pandemic. Partner organisations reported significant increases in demand, and CFINE responded regularly to additional requests for support.

Coupled with the food provision was increased capacity for SAFE Outreach support. This ensured a member of the SAFE Team visited community organisations, providing a place-based approach to supporting individual beneficiaries. This was achieved by physically being in local communities, providing a 1 to 1 person-centred service.

By providing drop-in services, attending community groups, and facilitating pop-up engagement events, more individuals were able to access financial advice, benefits maximisation, and money management support. Immediate interventions helped individuals avoid eviction with referrals to Aberdeen City Council's rent assistance fund, secure emergency funds from the Scottish Welfare Fund, cash first initiatives, energy vouchers, access to food provision including pantry memberships, and receive essential household support using CFINE's referral pathways and knowledge. Through outreach efforts beneficiaries gained knowledge of their entitlements, local advisory services such as Grampian Housing Association's SMART Money Advice Project, Christians Against Poverty, Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau, and Aberdeen City Council Financial Inclusion Team, and how to access support with self or agency referrals and information about how to follow up referrals.

Beneficiaries who engaged with SAFE Outreach developed sustainable financial management strategies, reducing reliance on crisis support services. Increased levels of wellbeing and confidence were reported, with reduced stress and anxiety associated with financial insecurity. Some participants reported feeling more in control of their finances, identified during

follow up conversations with those supported.

By embedding financial capability education and advice into community settings, beneficiaries were more likely to seek help proactively, preventing future financial crises as they were being met at a location they know, with staff and volunteers who they found approachable and relatable in terms of their ongoing situation and circumstances. The combination of immediate financial interventions and longer-term empowerment strategies ensured that those facing financial hardship were supported in both crisis situations and in building financial resilience for the future.



Part of the funding went towards providing 500 free memberships of CFINE's Community Food Pantry, allowing for these to be 'sponsored' meaning beneficiaries could use the service for free. Each 'shop' at the pantry is valued at between £15-£20, and members can pick which items they require. This is a more dignified alternative to a food bank and is aimed not only at maximising income for beneficiaries, but crucially has integrated access to all of CFINE's wrap-around services which tackle the underlying causes of poverty & food insecurity. Engagement with these services, such as support from SAFE and employability support, can lead to people moving out of poverty permanently.

The service provided immediate positive impact in enabling members to free up budget to purchase other essentials. In the long term the majority of members will utilise the pantry until their financial situation improves.

Instant Neighbour receives the Cost-of-Living funded food once a week, distributed through CFINE. In 2024-25, we received 16.01 tonnes of this food, which complimented public donations and food received through Fareshare.

This food is the staple of our food parcels, which usually weigh between 6 and 8kg. 16.01 tonnes of food equates to around 2,000 food parcels. In 2024, we distributed 7,797 food parcels, with 1,313 of these food parcels going to families. The Cost-of-Living food alone was enough to cover the food parcels we issued to families, and more.

During the break between March and July 2024, without the Cost-of-Living food, we had to cut back our food parcels to around 3-4kg, and at times could only distribute fresh food received through Fareshare.

The Cost-of-Living funded food has also taken a significant amount of pressure off of Instant Neighbour, as during the period we were not receiving the funded food, we spent £2,572.90 on purchasing food to keep stock levels up, alongside public donations and Fareshare. This was not sustainable, and our purchased food would usually only last 3 or 4 days as demand was unchanged.

With the upcoming rises in Council Tax, social housing rent and the potential changes to Universal Credit health assessments, the demand for emergency food is likely to grow, and without the food that we receive through CFINE, we will find ourselves unable to maintain stocks and unable to keep supporting the people who need our help the most.

Shown below is a picture of our food stocks from 22nd May 2024, and the following picture is our current stock from the Cost-of-Living food.



SCARF

696 households provided with payments towards fuel bills

463 pre-payment vouchers

233 direct payments

402 discretionary payments

1,117 onward referrals made to appropriate advice/support organisations

696 households receiving tailored energy efficiency advice via home visit

82 households removed from fuel poverty (10% of total income)

1,176 people supported

£130,000 was allocated to SCARF to support households and families living in fuel poverty. Households impacted by the cost of living crisis, particularly those experiencing fuel poverty, were targeted. Financial assistance in the form of fuel vouchers for pre-payment meters and top-ups for credit meters was provided. A discretionary payment to reduce or remove fuel debt was also applied subject to circumstances. Scarf carried out assessments of the household circumstances and established eligibility for support using established criteria to support more people, especially those who are in work poverty.

The Cost of Living Fund has provided crucial support to households across the city, addressing fuel poverty and alleviating the financial pressures of living in a challenging economic environment. The fund has made a tangible difference in the lives of 1,176 individuals, including both adults and children. The largest share of funding has been used to support the city's most economically deprived areas.

In terms of financial support, the direct and discretionary payments have relieved immediate financial stress for households, helping families clear fuel debts, pay for essential

services, and cover other pressing costs.

Energy Advice is given as part of the outreach work, households also received tailored energy efficiency advice, helping them reduce energy usage and lower future bills. This holistic support addresses both short-term needs and long-term sustainability.

A total of 1,117 onward referrals to partner organisations have enhanced the overall impact of this programme. These referrals have directed families to ongoing support, from financial assistance to energy-saving advice, and even food parcel distribution, ensuring that families continue to receive the help they need.

Referred to Scarf for support, an Aberdeen client was facing multiple energy-related challenges. He wanted top-up meters for both gas and electricity, but his gas meter was stuck in credit mode, preventing him from controlling his payments. His supplier had not been receiving meter readings, leading to a growing energy debt that had spiralled beyond what he could afford to pay. With no clear resolution from his supplier, he was struggling to manage his energy costs.

During the first home visit, a Scarf advisor contacted the client's energy supplier to submit an accurate gas meter reading. The client was issued £300 from the Aberdeen Cost of Living Fund, reducing his debt from £800 to £500. An attempt was made to set up a payment plan, but when the supplier's demands were unaffordable, the client opted to make payments as he could.

Although the supplier initially engaged with the client, progress stalled. Over the next month, the client received several calls with no resolution. When the issue remained unresolved, Scarf returned for a follow-up visit to push for action. We recontacted the energy supplier, leading to the case being reassigned to a new department. We issued six £49 fuel vouchers (£294 total) to ease the client's immediate electricity costs and arranged for the meter mode change, ensuring the client could finally switch to a top-up system.

Additionally, tailored behavioural energy advice helped the client cut unnecessary energy waste, leading to £248 in further savings and a 0.7 tonne reduction in carbon emissions. After weeks of delays, the supplier finally processed the meter mode change, giving the client control over his gas payments. With fuel vouchers and £300 off his debt, his financial burden eased, and he could manage his bills with confidence. Scarf's continued intervention ensured the issue didn't slip through the cracks, helping the client navigate a complex process that he would have struggled to resolve alone.

With his meter issue resolved and debt reduced, the client can now manage his energy costs more effectively. Scarf remains available for ongoing support, ensuring he stays on track with his payments and energy efficiency. By gaining control over his bills, the client now feels more confident handling supplier issues - a lasting impact that empowers him beyond this intervention.

AberNecessities

50 families fleeing domestic abuse supported with kitchen items
80 pregnant women supported with maternity clothes and hospital bags
1000 families supported with toiletries and cleaning products
4000 people supported

£40,300 was allocated to AberNecessities to support financially vulnerable families, including lone parents, families with children fleeing domestic abuse, low income families, and families from marginalised groups.

Feedback from professionals working with the families supported have reported positive changes for many of the families and in particular for families fleeing domestic abuse and for pregnant women who have felt a sense of relief and reduced stress on receiving the items.

“Thank you so much for the items provided for B and her children who are living within our refuge. B shared that she was "crying so much" when they were looking through the items and that she "cannot say how much this has meant" to her, particularly during a time which was very stressful for her. To see her children so happy was an overwhelming feeling of relief for her and the children were very happy with the items.”



"I went through the bag with the Mum concerned yesterday, she was so delighted with it. It has allayed her anxiety as she was scared she wouldn't have everything she needed. The way the bags are put together are so beautiful and it makes such a difference to women in similar positions. They feel not good enough but to be given such a lovely gift makes a big difference. The detail in what you provide is amazing, down to the snacks and hair bobbles! You think of everything. The bag is waiting on the Labour ward for this woman's admission, I could see the stress lift from her. I think the bag signifies that people do care and that's so important, you never know what impact that can have."



Christmas Family Panto Package

**67 families provided with a Panto package
300 people benefitted**

£10,000 was allocated to Aberdeen Performing Arts to provide a Christmas family pantomime package for Jack and the Beanstalk at HMT or The Unicorns Christmas Dance Party for younger children at the Lemon Tree. The main target group was families living with deprivation who would otherwise not be able to attend a Christmas show.

The funding gave families the opportunity to visit His Majesty's Theatre and enjoy the festive panto. Many of the families had never been in HMT and it's important to break down barriers to participation and access to the arts, to city venues and to make people feel welcome. Christmas is often a time where money is particularly tight for families and

a visit to the panto can be an unaffordable luxury. Families who attended enjoyed a fun activity together. The aim was for families to feel welcome and included and for any pre-conceived ideas that the theatre is an exclusive experience to be dismantled. Children may be inspired to engage in creative activities as a result of seeing the panto. Aberdeen Performing Arts offer free spaces in all their early years music activities and youth theatre workshops and children who have never been in HMT before may feel less intimidated about joining their Creative Engagement programme. Contact will be made with schools who attended to let them know about the Creative Engagement offers.

“The kids had never been to a panto before, mum said the kids just loved it, the whole experience was brilliant from start to finish. Laughed all the way to the end. Her daughter has not stopped speaking about it. As mum said she would never have been able to afford to take them all there.”

“Thank you very much for the tickets for the panto. We really enjoyed it as we thought it was very funny and we laughed a lot. I loved the ice cream and that I got a new sword which was ace. I know we were very lucky to get tickets so thanks a lot.”



“I enjoyed it. It was funny. The glasses were good and so was the ice cream.”

“I really liked it. I liked it when I got ice cream and I liked the giant beanstalk. It was good going with my friend. I liked the lightsaber I got. I enjoyed it!”

“I liked it! I enjoyed going with my friend. The giant coming out was my favourite part.”



Winter Clothing

**2699 Primary pupils
benefitted from a
£30 award**
**1682 Secondary pupils
benefitted from a
£30 award**
4381 children supported

£20,000 was allocated to Aberdeen City Council to provide winter clothing payments to anyone already in receipt of a school clothing grant. School clothing grants are available to anyone whose child attends an Aberdeen City Council school, or are going to enter Primary 1, and are in receipt of benefits including Income Support, Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. Students who receive an Education Maintenance Allowance can also apply for a school clothing grant for themselves. Winter clothing payments assist families in need by ensuring that children have what they need to keep warm throughout the winter.

Every family in the city received direct targeted communication (email or text message) relating to the School Clothing Grant. Those believed to be entitled are sent targeted communications advising how to apply. Information is also included in the "Support for Families" booklet which is issued by the Financial Inclusion Team and sent to every family.

The short-term impact is children and young people are supported to purchase weather-appropriate clothing which removes the stigma and stress of not having appropriate clothing and improves school attendance.

The longer-term impact of providing winter clothing to children and young people in poverty is that it can improve their self-esteem, wellbeing and improve test results.

£17,340 of the funding was spent, due to a reduction in the number of families applying for grants.

Scottish Welfare Fund

1,108 people received a Crisis Grant

£96,382 was allocated to Aberdeen City Council to supplement the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF), which is a national scheme, underpinned by law and delivered on behalf of Scottish Government by all 32 local authorities. It aims to provide a safety net to vulnerable people on low incomes. Crisis Grants help meet immediate short-term needs when an individual is facing a disaster or emergency situation, and where there is an immediate threat to the health or safety of that individual or their family. They are usually for food, gas or electricity but where a disaster has happened, for example a flood, items like cookers and furniture can be provided.

The short-term impact of awarding a Crisis Grant is citizens receiving immediate financial assistance to help them through an emergency situation.

The Fund adopts a holistic approach and will consider the wider needs of a citizen accessing the service. In this context, it may include longer-term needs and assistance including housing, health issues and money management. Building and maintaining relationships with internal and external partners can ensure users of the fund are signposted to other services to address their wider needs longer-term. Onward referrals are a positive way of offering longer-term solutions.

Discretionary Housing Payments

146 claimants supported

£100,000 was allocated to Aberdeen City Council to provide Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to help people on low incomes who are having trouble paying their rent. DHPs can help with rent, rent deposits, or removal costs. They can also help with restrictions that limit Housing Benefit, such as the maximum number of bedrooms that benefits can cover.

The short-term impact of DHP is providing help to citizens who are having difficulty paying their rent due to financial challenges and therefore, being supported to prevent them going into rent arrears. The longer-term impact of DHP with providing those who need extra help with their housing costs, is thereby reducing poverty, maintaining tenancies and preventing homelessness.



"Thank you for your help with our client who would be declaring himself homeless on his 16th birthday.

We managed to get him into safe and suitable accommodation and he was very grateful and delighted with the items from AberNecessities, especially the hoodie and the razor!"

AbzWorks Childcare costs

16 families supported with childcare costs
7 parents supported into employment
4 parents supported to stay in employment
1 parent supported to sustain education to access paid employment
2 parents supported to undertake paid work experience
16 parents benefitted
28 children benefitted

£60,000 was allocated to Aberdeen City Council ABZWorks to provide support with childcare costs to parents where childcare provision is a main barrier to employment or employability support. This included financial grants to parents who are looking to enter into employability support, employment or education, for parents already in employment, but struggling to sustain this due to cost of childcare, and to pay for deposits or settling in periods to help alleviate initial financial pressures, and ease the transition process for both parents and their children.

The funding secured has been transformative in creating meaningful opportunities for families, directly addressing childcare costs and supporting their journeys towards greater stability and success in their employment journey. The allocation of funding has

empowered families to achieve their potential, without financial burdens stopping them reaching their goals. Ultimately, the funding has not only alleviated financial worries but also reduced stress for families, empowering them to navigate employment with confidence and focus. It has served as a catalyst for change, supporting families to overcome barriers and embrace opportunities that help them out of poverty.

Only £31,350 of the funding was required to be spent, due to ABZWorks' approach of integrating childcare costs into their commissioned services, funded through Scottish Government's No One Left Behind funding. Using the same funding a Financial Inclusion Officer was embedded within the team, working with parents to access available financial support, including avenues to cover childcare costs where applicable.

One mum expressed a strong desire to participate in ABZWorks' paid work experience programme delivered in partnership with Early Learning and Childcare. During her interview she demonstrated a clear passion for supporting children's growth and development and shared her aspiration to build a career in this field. However, she highlighted the significant barrier: the cost of childcare for her youngest child, which was unaffordable due to the family's limited income. Through the provision of childcare support, this individual was able to overcome financial obstacles and fully engaged with the placement opportunity. Our participation not only allowed her to gain valuable experience but also brought her immense satisfaction. Following successful completion of the placement, she has now joined the relief pool, enabling her to continue working flexibly around her availability. In addition, the funding facilitated additional settling in days for her daughter prior to the commencement of employment. This approach ensured her daughter's smooth transition and well-being, empowering her mum to focus on her professional journey with confidence.



“Help with the childcare cost was crucial, otherwise it would be impossible for me to pay the nursery. Not having to worry with this cost for the beginning of my returning to work, helped me to focus on my learning and development at work.”

Poverty Awareness

4 short films produced
3 events where films screened
3 podcasts produced
5 people trained in podcasting and interview methods
17 volunteers involved



£20,000 was allocated to SHMU to produce a series of podcasts and short films, capturing and platforming the lived experience of those who have been affected by poverty. This included exploring the issues affecting particular groups in more depth, for example lone parents, disabled people, and those affected by No Recourse to Public Funds, developing a stronger sense of the issues and barriers experienced by people and communities within an Aberdeen context. This was with a view to increasing awareness amongst policy and decision makers, as well as the wider public, of the extent and impact of poverty in the City, as well as raising awareness with people and communities affected of the support services available. In terms of shorter term outcomes, the project has provided five lived experience individuals with additional skills and training in media production. One of those individuals is now signed up to take part in a 6-8 week radio training course, and SHMU hope they will host a regular show about the Tillydrone community. SHMU are in discussions to continue working with

the lived experience group at CFINE, to support them to capture their future work around a manifesto around food poverty and the 2026 Scottish elections.

One of the longer terms impacts of this work will be increased awareness of how and where people can access support. For example, as they share the film about unclaimed benefits, they anticipate that this will lead to people accessing support from the partner organisations highlighted in the film, and claiming the benefits that they are entitled to. They also believe that the media that is produced will have the impact of reducing stigma around poverty. The [Women and Poverty](#) film has already been used in training settings for practitioners and professionals (including being used for poverty awareness sessions nationally by the EIS trade union, and locally for a Community Learning and Development staff development day), and this will lead to an increased awareness, empathy and sensitivity when dealing with individuals going through similar experiences in the future. Producing media within a local context will help

individuals feel more empathy for people going through similar situations in the City, and those who need support will be able to see that there is nothing shameful about reaching out for help, advice and support.

In the case of the Tillydrone podcast series, one of the themes brought out by the project was a lack of awareness within the community of different services available within the area. The launch of the podcast will be used to promote the opportunity to get involved in developing a new website for the Tillydrone area, which will help promote relevant support, activities and opportunities in the area, as well as showcase community stories, like the Tillydrone In Focus podcast.

SHMU feel that films and podcasts that highlight lived experiences of poverty and inequality in Aberdeen have an important role to play in terms of prevention of poverty, by helping to reframe narratives, increasing empathy, increasing awareness of services, and decreasing the stigma attached to asking for help at an early stage.

Mary has lived in Tillydrone since the 1990s. She takes part in a number of groups and activities in the area and is on the management committee of the Tillydrone Community Flat. She worked as a Modern Studies teacher as well as a support worker. She has a number of health conditions and, with the exception of audio describing work in the theatre, hasn't been in employment since 2019.

Our first meeting took place at Aberdeen Lads Club, where we discussed how she would like to be involved. Mary expressed a strong interest in the interviewing side of the project, so we decided to begin with an interview with Angie Johnston, the manager at the Lads Club, as she had got to know her and it was a safe space to start. Rhona, SHMU's Podcast worker for the project, met Mary before this interview took place, prepared the questions for Mary to follow and supported her during the recording. As her confidence grew, Mary showed real talent for interviewing and would come up with her own questions as well as including a personal perspective. Her own experience of living in Tillydrone was invaluable – being able to raise discussion points that someone from outwith the area couldn't have anticipated, as well as suggesting people or organisations that might be good to involve in the project. It also allowed her to build up trust with interviewees who would often be sharing quite personal information.

After the podcasts had been edited, Mary was also involved in shaping the final scripts – again, adding her own personal perspective. Mary shared that, thinking back to her first interview with Angie through to the final interview with the local Councillor, she had grown in confidence with her interviewing skills. She intends to enrol in the 6 week shmu radio training as soon as there is a block running that she's available to attend. She has expressed an interest in presenting a show – current affairs is something that is of particular interest to her.

“There’s a lot more to making a podcast than just asking questions. I hadn’t realised how much goes into it behind the scenes. I’m not very technically minded, so the technical side isn’t really for me.”

Telecare

1 family supported to purchase telecare equipment

£20,020 was allocated to Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership to provide telecare support to low income families to support both cared for and Carer in purchasing equipment and devices for additional support straight into their homes. This would break the barrier of device costs for telecare support for low income families. Both unpaid Carers and the cared for person receive reassurance, reminders, prompts and support digitally, reducing the need for hands on care support and reducing the risk of emergency response.

£1,022 was spent to support one individual who was in arrears regarding payments for their technology and telecare, so that they could keep their equipment. They also received support to maximise their benefits and to manage their finances. More cases are in progress.

Power of Attorney

4 families supported to arrange Power of Attorney

£10,000 was allocated to Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership to provide support to low income families to arrange power of attorney because delays in support, health and care decisions and access can be due to a lack of Power of Attorney arrangements in place. The cost of Power of Attorney is usually unexpected and a barrier to low income families, particularly at point of crisis. This would support families in gaining power of attorney arrangements for Carers without delay or barrier.

£1,400 was spent and 4 families supported to arrange Power of Attorney. A number of people were able to obtain a Power of Attorney free because of the benefits they are receiving, they have been given advice and support to do this. A number of people have been approached offering assistance due to recent hospital admissions but at this time they and their families have declined to progress POAs however they will continue to be encouraged to consider it.



“It cannot be understated how critical the supply of purchased food has been in responding to the cost-of-living crisis. During this period, food inflation spiked, and people found themselves with the impossible decision to heat their homes or feed their family. The short-term positive impact of the food is clear: it provided much needed supplies for individuals who had no other way of getting them. It should be noted that CFINE and Food Poverty Action Aberdeen promotes prevention and early intervention to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity, so people don’t find themselves having to rely on emergency food in the future. However, it is essential that people’s basic needs are met during times of economic instability, and providing this food support did this successfully.”

Thank you for enabling me to have healthy food, week after week, and enabling me to have a decent quality of life.

As many of you know I was homeless or insecurely housed for a number of years and my life was chaotic. I often was without enough money to eat properly as priority was to keep was to keep myself safe with a roof over my head.

Food insecurity has been very traumatic, especially if it’s prolonged and I know it will take time to recover. It’s so lovely that here at the pantry it’s not just about shopping. Theres a wonderful warmth and a buzz in the place and I really look forward to my weekly visit.

Thank you so much for your kindness and your solidarity!

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	11 June 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Working in Partnership for Aberdeen - Supporting people with the cost of living 2025/26
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/132
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Michelle Crombie, Strategic Lead. Prevention and Community Empowerment Susan Thoms, Fairer Aberdeen and Anti-Poverty Manager External Advisers
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 3.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the allocation of the £1million provided by Council to support people with the cost of living during 2025/26.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approves the proposed allocation of funds from the £1million provided by Council to support people with the cost of living crisis during 2025/26 as detailed in paragraph 3.9 below.
- 2.2 Instructs the Executive Director of Corporate Services to bring an update on spend, progress, any reallocation of resources and further proposals for the balance of funding to the meeting of the Committee on 26 November 2025.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Following the decision at the Council on 5 March 2025, engagement took place with the external advisers to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee to determine the proposals for Supporting People with the Cost of Living funding to be submitted to consideration by the committee.

- 3.2 2025/26 Allocation Process:



- 3.3 External advisers met on 21 March 2025 to discuss the approach to allocating cost of living funding for 2025/26. They agreed to consider applications submitted to the Fairer Aberdeen Fund and Common Good Fund for 2025/26, where they supported the mitigation and prevention of poverty but had not been funded. The benefit of taking this approach is that it builds on an already established, open, clear and transparent process for receiving proposals from community groups and organisations. Permission was sought from the organisations submitting applications to the Fairer Aberdeen Fund and Common Good Fund before information was shared with the external advisers.
- 3.4 As well as this, the external advisers considered suggestions identified through the previous years Committee visits and re-considered ideas gathered as part of the 2024/25 cost of living fund allocation process, particularly in terms of recurring priorities. There was an opportunity for shortlisted organisations previously funded through the cost of living fund to update their proposals for 2025/26.
- 3.5 See Appendix 2 for the list of all proposals considered using the same principles established for the allocation of cost of living funding during 2024/25. These include:
- Alleviation of poverty and achieve best outcomes for people
 - Consider a seasonal approach to reflect differing needs, with more than one allocation
 - Ensure coverage of range of poverty issues, addressing crisis needs and prevention
 - Avoid funding new posts which may not be financially sustainable and could lead to unemployment due to funding being non-recurring. However, would cover the cost of existing staff being asked to do additional work, for example distributing more goods and/ or where staffing costs are necessary to build capacity to make a shift towards prevention.
- 3.6 In addition to applying these principles, the external advisers requested information on whether shortlisted organisations had been allocated funding from the Council in previous and current years so this could be taken into account, see Appendix 3. They also agreed to discuss the potential for funding to be secured elsewhere for proposals to maximise the limited funding available from the Council. For example, where external advisers had knowledge of funds available external to the Council and across the private sector, this could be suggested to the organisation as an alternative source of funding.
- 3.7 Whilst external advisers considered changing seasonal in allocating funding, they felt that this could be predicted at the beginning of the year and that funding should be allocated as early as possible to give organisations more time to plan and spend the funding, as well as demonstrate impact over a longer period. This approach also reduces the administrative burden on both the funders and the applicants.
- 3.8 The proposals within this report leave a balance of £0.

Recommended Proposals

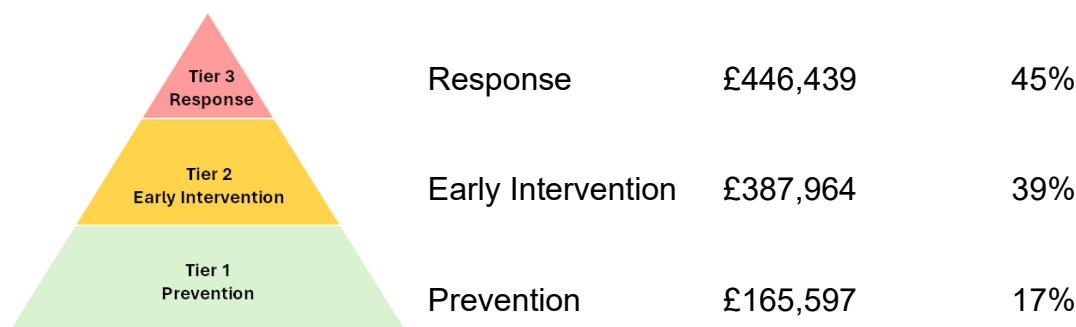
3.9 The proposals recommended to the Committee for funding are set out in the table below, shown against the three tiers of prevention. These are the proposals which have been identified as being the highest priority to support people and families to cope with upcoming winter pressures.

Proposal	Lead Organisation	Allocation £	Staff Costs Funded (% of allocation)	No. People Supported	Prevention Tier	Description/ Rationale See Appendix 1 for further information.
Support for underprivileged children	AberNecessities	£161,113	£29,113 (18%)	600	Response	Provide 600 bundles of clothing for teenagers, carefully chosen to meet the individual needs of young people, providing dignity and opportunities to participate in activities with their peers. Volunteer Coordinator to lead their team of 100 community volunteers and corporate volunteering to support the work of the organisation.
Infant formula	AberNecessities	£14,129	£0	420	Response	Direct provision of infant formula for disadvantaged families to meet the basic needs of a child in order to give them the best start possible. Infant formula is also provided through the Infant Feeding in a Crisis Pathway Cash First Approach delivered by CFINE, funded by the food procurement allocation.
Food procurement	Food Poverty Action Aberdeen	£271,197	£30,876 (11%)	11,000	Response	CFINE, on behalf of Food Poverty Action Aberdeen (FPAA) and the wider FareShare network of Community Food Members (CFM's), will undertake procurement of food for distribution across the city, currently to 85 organisations.
Winter clothing	Aberdeen City Council, Revenues & Benefits	£130,000	£0	4,300	Early intervention	Provision of £30 Winter Clothing grants for families who are eligible and receive the School Clothing Grant. Every family in the city receives direct targeted communication (email or text message) relating to the School Clothing Grant. Those who are entitled are sent targeted communications advising they are entitled and how to apply.
Discretionary Housing Payments	Aberdeen City Council,	£100,000	£0	140	Early intervention	Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to help people on low incomes who are having trouble paying their rent. DHPs can help with rent, rent

Proposal	Lead Organisation	Allocation £	Staff Costs Funded (% of allocation)	No. People Supported	Prevention Tier	Description/ Rationale See Appendix 1 for further information.
	Revenues & Benefits					deposits, or removal costs. They can also help with restrictions that limit Housing Benefit, such as the maximum number of bedrooms that benefits can cover or the Benefit Cap. Citizens will be signposted to apply by both internal and external partners for example Financial Inclusion Team, Housing and landlords both Private and Housing Associations.
Community Hub rent and energy costs	Aberdeen Cyrenians	£48,600	£0	1,600	Early intervention	Provide cost of rent and 50% energy costs to continue to deliver their core charitable services, providing crisis support, access to essentials, and early intervention, emotional and practical support, and skills development.
Christmas Panto Package for low income families	Aberdeen Performing Arts	£10,000	£0	300	Early intervention	A Christmas family pantomime package for HMT or the Lemon Tree for families living with deprivation who would otherwise not be able to attend a Christmas show.
Supporting vulnerable women in Torry	Bethany Christian Church	£4,364	£3,164 (72%)	15	Early intervention	Provide person centred support for women in Torry who have various issues including domestic violence, mental health issues, family support, and isolation. Offering practical help and advocacy support, and linking them to appropriate support services.
Fuel Poverty	SCARF	£95,000	£10,000 (10%)	1,000	Early intervention	Tackling fuel poverty by addressing debt through direct and discretionary payments to relieve immediate financial stress for households, helping pay for essential services and other pressing costs. Includes energy efficiency advice and referrals to relevant partner organisations for wider support.
Financial advice for elderly and disabled people and unpaid carers	Aberdeen Care and Repair	£38,359	£38,359 (100%)	1,055	Prevention	Funding Officer to support older people and unpaid carers, including those with a disability and/or long term health issues. Support is provided through home visits, to ensure people are claiming/receiving their full benefit entitlement and to apply for charitable funding where appropriate.

Proposal	Lead Organisation	Allocation £	Staff Costs Funded (% of allocation)	No. People Supported	Prevention Tier	Description/ Rationale See Appendix 1 for further information.
Cash First infant formula	CFINE	£12,000	£0	160 tins	Prevention	Cash First payments for infant formula, in partnership with NHS Grampian and ACC to provide the Infant Formula Crisis Pathway which ensures a crisis response to formula provision. The service is administered via Paypoint, which allows the issue of electronic and physical vouchers which are redeemed for cash.
Community Pantries	CFINE	£66,500	£0	500 weekly shops	Prevention	500 weekly pantry shops to offer a more sustainable and dignified approach to food insecurity. This service provides immediate positive impact ensuring members can free up budgets to purchase other essentials. The pantry provides access to wrap-around services which tackle the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity.
SAFE financial advice outreach	CFINE	£28,738	£28,738 (100%)	75	Prevention	SAFE Outreach financial advice work to provide a vital link for individuals facing food insecurity and poverty, with support such as benefits/welfare advice, household budgeting, and other support delivered in community settings.
Poverty Awareness	SHMU	£20,000	£20,000 (100%)	4 short films 3 podcasts 30 lived experience people sharing their stories	Prevention	Produce a series of podcasts and short films, capturing and platforming the lived experience of those who have been affected by poverty. Bring these stories to policy and decision makers, through the development of digital magazine packages as well as a special event as part of Challenge Poverty Week.
	TOTAL	£1,000,000				

- 3.10 The proposed allocations have been mapped against the three tiers of prevention to show the balance of spend from the £1million during 2025-26.



- 3.11 Allocations made in 2024-25 mapped against the three tiers of prevention were: Response 76%, Early Intervention 13%, and Prevention 11%.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposals within this report are within the £1million financial allocation approved by Council at the meeting on 5 March 2025, leaving a balance of £0 to be allocated. This is a one-off fund that has no recurring commitment.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Funds allocated to third parties will be subject to Aberdeen City Council's standard terms and conditions. Grant funding must comply with the Council's obligations under Subsidy Control legislation.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	There is a risk that failing to support people struggling to meet the increased cost of living could lead to longer term economic harm.	Delivery of recommendations to help mitigate the cost of living impacts for the most vulnerable, alongside work and support across services, partners and third sector.	L	Yes
Compliance	There is a risk of failing to comply	Delivery of recommendations to	L	Yes

	<p>with a Council decision to spend the allocated £1m to help the most vulnerable in our community with energy costs.</p> <p>There is a risk of grant funding not complying with subsidy control obligations.</p>	<p>help mitigate the cost of living impacts for the most vulnerable, alongside work and support across services, partners and third sector.</p> <p>Confirming for each grant that it is either not a subsidy or that appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that a subsidy would be lawful.</p>	L	Yes
Operational	The project delivery in this report requires some resource from the Council, but mainly through partners	Strong partnership working with organisations identified will ensure this risk is minimised.	L	Yes
Financial	There is a risk of failing to deliver and spend the approved budget	The proposals present options for delivering and spending the budget.	L	Yes
Reputational	There is a risk that failing to support people struggling to meet the cost of living could lead to reputational damage.	The delivery described in this report demonstrates a clear commitment to supporting people with the cost of living	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No environmental risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting People with the Cost of Living Actively support Aberdeen's foodbanks and provide assistance with bulk purchasing where desirable.

Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Stretch outcome 1: 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Stretch outcome 12: Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring with a longer term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Supporting People with the Cost of Living CORS/24/152](#)

11. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Recommended Proposals
- Appendix 2 All Proposals Received
- Appendix 3 Council Funded Organisations

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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APPENDIX 1 RECOMMENDED PROPOSALS

Contents

Proposed activity	Support for underprivileged children
Proposed activity	Infant formula
Proposed activity	Food procurement, financial advice outreach, community pantries
Proposed activity	Winter clothing
Proposed activity	Discretionary Housing Payments
Proposed activity	Community Hub rent and energy costs
Proposed activity	Christmas panto package for low income families
Proposed activity	Supporting vulnerable women in Torry
Proposed activity	Fuel poverty
Proposed activity	Financial advice for elderly and disabled people
Proposed activity	Poverty awareness

Proposed activity	Support for underprivileged children
Lead Organisation	AberNecessities
Number of people supported	600
Funding proposed	£161,113
Staff costs	£29,113 (18% of allocation)
Summary of activity:	
<p>AberNecessities will purchase and distribute 600 bundles of clothing and trainers to teenagers aged 12-18. These items will be carefully chosen to ensure they meet the individual needs of each child and young person. The clothing bundles will include items such as trainers, jacket, underwear, t-shirts and joggers/leggings. They will search for cost effective ways to buy quality goods which enables young people to feel confident with the hope that it avoids any bullying behaviour and allowing them to take part not only in school but in wider activities in the community.</p> <p>Their team of volunteers led by the Volunteer Co-Ordinator will accept new items for the clothing bundles and organise these so that the team can create a bespoke package, personalised to individual children.</p> <p>Professionals from NHS, Education, Social Work and other third sector organisations will apply for support using their robust referral system. Alongside receiving these applications the team will continue to prepare items for distribution from purchasing items, organising donations and delivering these to families in a timely manner.</p> <p>The full time Volunteer Co-ordinator manages over 100 community volunteers and is responsible for corporate volunteering opportunities including local, national, and international business partners, highlighting how valuable Aberdeen's wider connections are. Each volunteer plays a pivotal role in the organisation, for which they were recognised by receiving the Kings Award for Voluntary Service in 2024.</p> <p>They will offer community and corporate volunteering opportunities which are well planned, organised and enable volunteers to support local children while feeling valued and making positive relationships in the local area.</p>	
Proposed activity	Infant formula
Lead Organisation	AberNecessities
Number of people supported	420
Funding proposed	£14,129
Staff costs	£0
Summary of activity:	

The funding will support families disproportionately affected by the cost of living crisis specifically caring for a baby aged 0-1 years old. Caring for a very young baby adds substantial financial burden to families who are already living with low incomes.

While foodbanks are supported to offer breastfeeding mothers food, they are not always equipped to supply formula milk making it very challenging for families to access this product when they need it. It is also not possible to use shopping vouchers loyalty points for this product and the grants which some parents are entitled to do not adequately cover the cost of this item.

They will distribute physical tins of formula milk to families who require this support and will meet the need by using their referral system. Volunteer drivers will either deliver directly to the family or the professional applying for the support may collect the items from them.

With this funding they would be able to provide 841 tins of formula milk.

Items will be delivered alongside washing up liquid, sterilising fluid and a bottle brush which will be funded by their fundraising efforts.

Proposed activity	Food procurement, financial advice outreach, and community pantries
Lead Organisation	CFINE on behalf of Food Poverty Action Aberdeen
Number of people supported	11,000
Funding proposed	£378,435
Staff costs	£59,614 (16% of allocation)

Summary of activity:

The main target group to be supported by CFINE, on behalf of FPAA are vulnerable, disadvantaged individuals, communities, and families in Aberdeen who have been adversely affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Record levels of inflation over the last few years has had a disproportionately negative impact on people who were already struggling. Food inflation peaked to a 45 year high at 19.2% in March 2023, and despite inflation increasing at a lower rate in recent months, the dramatic rises continue to be felt. CFINE's experience has shown that often people are making the decision to heat their home or feed their family and often need to make other impossible choices about essential household expenditure.

CFINE, on behalf of Food Poverty Action Aberdeen (FPAA) and the wider FareShare network of Community Food Members (CFM's), will continue the ongoing distribution of food purchased through the Cost-of-Living fund, and will provide additional support services e.g., SAFE Outreach. The partnership is key to ensuring a wider range of support is made available and accessible to individuals and families experiencing financial crisis with a strong referral pathway in place.

CFINE will continue to work in partnership with NHS Grampian and ACC to provide the Infant Formula Crisis Pathway which ensures a crisis response to formula provision. The service is administered via Paypoint, which allows the issue of electronic and physical vouchers which are redeemed for cash. The cash can then be used to purchase formula milk specific to the infant's needs.

The SAFE outreach work will continue to provide a vital link for individuals facing food insecurity and poverty, with support such as benefits/welfare advice, household budgeting, and other support in community settings. The SAFE outreach worker will generate financial gain for beneficiaries, securing benefits they may not have had access to previously, thus maximising household income. Throughout the 2024-25 Cost of Living funded period, £232,489.36 has been achieved through the SAFE Outreach work.

Community Food Pantries provide immediate positive impact ensuring members can free up budgets to purchase other essentials. Long term, the majority of members will utilise the pantry until their financial situation improves. The pantry provides access to wrap-around services which tackle the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity. Engagement with these services, such as support via SAFE and employability support can lead to people moving out of poverty permanently.

To ensure the effective delivery of this funded work on behalf of FPAA, the budget includes staff costs which total to 11.7% of the overall proposal; these include:

SAFE Outreach Worker

Dedicated driver and warehouse time will ensure consistency of the coordination of packing orders and deliveries. Whilst we engage with volunteer drivers, we should not be fully dependent on them alone to undertake the volume of work required; regular distribution to c85 projects.

Development / Administration to provide a contribution of dedicated administrative support for key areas of delivery, including - bulk ordering of food and maintaining accurate records of data, including, memberships, food volume distribution etc. Communication is key to the effective delivery of services and requires partnership involvement - this role will contribute to effective communication both with the CFINE team and external partners involved in all areas of this work.

Proposed activity	Winter clothing
Lead Organisation	Aberdeen City Council, Revenues & Benefits
Number of people supported	4,300
Funding proposed	£130,000
Staff costs	£0
Summary of activity:	

Provision of £30 Winter Clothing grants for families who are eligible and receive the School Clothing Grant. Every family in the city receives direct targeted communication (email or text message) relating to the School Clothing Grant. Those who are entitled are sent targeted communications advising they are entitled and how to apply.

The short-term impact is children and young people are supported to purchase weather-appropriate clothing which removes the stigma and stress of not having appropriate clothing and improves school attendance.

The longer-term impact of providing winter clothing to children and young people in poverty is that it can improve their self-esteem, wellbeing and improve test results.

Proposed activity	Discretionary Housing Payments
Lead Organisation	Aberdeen City Council, Revenues & Benefits
Number of people supported	140
Funding proposed	£100,000
Staff costs	£0
Summary of activity:	

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to help people on low incomes who are having trouble paying their rent. DHPs can help with rent, rent deposits, or removal costs. They can also help with restrictions that limit Housing Benefit, such as the maximum number of bedrooms that benefits can cover or the Benefit Cap.

In terms of identifying beneficiaries DHP is well established and utilised by citizens. However, citizens will be signposted to apply by both internal and external partners for example Financial Inclusion Team, Housing and landlords both Private and Housing Associations.

The short-term impact of DHP is providing help to citizens who are having difficulty paying their rent due to financial challenges and therefore, being supported to prevent them going into rent arrears.

The longer-term impact of DHP with providing those who need extra help with their housing costs, is thereby reducing poverty, maintaining tenancies and preventing homelessness.

Proposed activity	Community Hub rent and energy costs
Lead Organisation	Aberdeen Cyrenians
Number of people supported	1,600
Funding proposed	£48,600
Staff costs	£0
Summary of activity:	

Provide cost of rent and 50% energy costs to continue to deliver their core charitable services, providing crisis support, access to essentials, and early intervention, emotional and practical support, and skills development.

Aberdeen Cyrenians request support for the rent of their Summer Street hub to enable service delivery focused on two key areas:

1. Crisis Support - Urgent Support and Accessing Essentials:
 - Someone to speak to
 - Basic needs: food, fuel, clothing, toiletries, and housing
 - Assistance with loss of financial entitlements
 - Safe space for those fleeing violence and abuse
 - Phone and computer access
 - Shower and laundry facilities
 - SIM and mobile data support
 - Household items
 - Accessing health support
 - Any immediate needs for safety and stability
2. Prevention and Intervention Services - Emotional and Practical Support, Skill Development & Community Connections
 - Housing and financial applications/appeals
 - Tenancy management
 - Budgeting and debt management
 - Kitchen and dining facilities (used by other community organisations at no cost)
 - Digital and employability skills
 - Community connections to reduce isolation
 - Wellbeing support for survivors of violence and abuse
 - Life and self-care development skills

From May 2025, Aberdeen Cyrenians will open on a Thursday evening followed by a Saturday morning to reflect the demand for support for those facing “in-work” poverty.

By focusing on prevention and community support, Aberdeen Cyrenians aim to reduce the strain on emergency and statutory services and improve the overall wellbeing of the city.

Proposed activity	Christmas panto package for low income families
Lead Organisation	Aberdeen Performing Arts
Number of people supported	300
Funding proposed	£10,000
Staff costs	£0
Summary of activity:	

Aberdeen Performing Arts are seeking funding to offer a Christmas family package to their festive panto, Cinderella, at His Majesty's Theatre. The main target group is families living with deprivation who would otherwise not be able to attend a Christmas show, as many families will do every Christmas. Provision for families to enjoy a fun experience together, attending the pantomime over the festive season. For many families, the theatre is an unaffordable experience, particularly in the current cost of living crisis and in the run up to Christmas time when families feel additional financial pressure. Many will never have visited His Majesty's Theatre before.

The package will include:

- a family ticket
- an ice cream for each family member
- a programme
- a toy for each child from the merchandise stall

This activity was successfully delivered in 2024/25 and they will again seek guidance and support from ACC Families and Communities and schools in identifying those families most at need who will benefit from the offer.

We will ensure families are not stigmatised with this offer. Tickets will be delivered to schools to be distributed to families, along with vouchers for ice creams, toys and a programme. The voucher system is one we use for our Friends of the Theatre and other groups so exchanging the vouchers for goods doesn't mark the families out in any way.

Proposed activity	Supporting vulnerable women in Torry
Lead Organisation	Bethany Christian Church
Number of people supported	15
Funding proposed	£4,364
Staff costs	£3,164 (72% of allocation)
Summary of activity:	

1-2-1 support and advocacy for a number of women living in Torry with various challenges, including domestic violence; mental health issues; family support; and isolation. Many of the women they work with also experience challenges related to lower household income, including: food insecurity, housing and benefits, unemployment, budgeting and debt. As a result, the client base is disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Provision of long-term support to enable the women to set goals, develop confidence and self-advocacy skills, access the practical resources they need, as well as seeking out volunteering or employment opportunities where appropriate.

Connecting women in crisis with the services and support they need, from housing support to mental health services, will create a system which catches community members before they end up in crisis, preventing worst case scenarios, like homelessness. The Support Worker will also work with women who are experiencing parenting challenges, supporting families to nurture children and young people.

The aim will be to reduce poverty and provide early-intervention support for women in Torry who are facing challenges, with the aim of building community resilience to the causes of homelessness.

Proposed activity	Fuel poverty
Lead Organisation	SCARF
Number of people supported	1,000
Funding proposed	£95,000
Staff costs	£10,000 (10% of allocation)
Summary of activity:	

Tackling fuel poverty by addressing debt through direct and discretionary payments to relieve immediate financial stress for households, helping pay for essential services and other pressing costs. Energy companies are not agreeing to writing off as much debt as in the past. There is also a lack of funding available that tackles the debt on meters. The change over to Smart meters is also causing debt issues as many customers are having to pay to get the companies out if they need to be setup by the energy companies.

Funding will target households impacted by the cost of living crisis with a specific focus on fuel poverty by providing financial assistance in the form of discretionary payments to reduce or remove fuel debt subject to circumstances. Scarf will carry out a remote assessment of the household circumstances and establish eligibility for support using established criteria. This will include household income under £31,000, which is in line with the Scottish Government Eco Cap, to support more people, especially those who are in work poverty.

Referrals/applications for support and onward referrals will be taken from; (not inclusive to) existing Home Energy Advice Team, established network of referral partners (e.g. CFINE, AberNecessities, Somebody Cares, Instant Neighbour and Council front-line services), Home Energy Scotland and online applications portal (developed by Scarf).

Scarf will seek to provide additional support including:

- Home visit where practical and with consent of the household
- General energy efficiency advice
- Onward referrals to further support services
- Onward referrals to energy efficiency schemes (ECO4)
- Onward referral to Home Energy Scotland/Warm Homes Scotland

Proposed activity	Financial advice for elderly and disabled people
Lead Organisation	Aberdeen Care and Repair
Number of people supported	1,055
Funding proposed	£38,359
Staff costs	£38,356 (100% of allocation)
Summary of activity:	

This post (Funding Officer) supports older people, people with a disability and/or long-term health problems, including children and unpaid carers remain living independently within their own home irrespective of tenure. The main purpose of this post in relation to financial hardship/poverty: they carry out a benefit checks, ensuring that older and or disabled people, including unpaid carers are claiming/receiving their full benefit entitlement; raise charitable for work required to the home for those in financial hardship where necessary; apply for annual annuities from charitable organisations for those on low fixed incomes, where appropriate. The Funding Officer visits people in their own homes; completes and submits applications either online or application forms for Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit Guarantee, ESA, UC, Carers Allowance, Blue Badges, and Adult Disability Payment. Very few organisations deliver this type of work through a home visiting service and their client group prefer the face-to-face interaction. The Funding Officer also supports clients who are in financial hardship and unable to meet the cost of repairs/improvements or adaptations to the home by approaching individual charitable organisations to raise funding to cover the cost of this work or offer a low-cost loan through Care and Repair where appropriate. All service users now receive a free Early Intervention and Prevention Survey which identifies other services/support that could be useful.

Proposed activity	Poverty Awareness
Lead Organisation	SHMU
Number of people supported	30 individuals with lived experience of poverty sharing their stories on social media platform. 4 films and 3 podcasts
Funding proposed	£20,000
Staff costs	£20,000 (100% of allocation)

Summary of activity:

Produce a series of podcasts and short films, capturing and platforming the lived experience of those who have been affected by poverty. Bring these stories to policy and decision makers, through the development of digital magazine packages as well as a special event as part of Challenge Poverty Week. Building on SHMU's recent work this follow up project would allow them to turn the spotlight on more thematic issues relating to poverty, further enhance the co-productive nature of our approach, and develop training materials out of the media resources.

Working with partner organisations, community members, existing lived experience forums, the Anti-Poverty Outcome Improvement Group, and the Committee, to identify further themes relating to poverty and inequality that can be brought to life through podcast and film-making. Through these media productions, they will shine a light on poverty-related issues that are lesser known in the City, and give a voice to those who are seldom heard by policy and decision makers.

APPENDIX 2 ALL PROPOSALS RECEIVED AND CONSIDERED

While all proposals were felt to have merit, they were categorised as high, medium or low priority in terms of how they would provide support to those in financial difficulties due to the cost of living crisis, and in relation to the funding available.

Proposal	Lead organisation	£ request	£ agreed	Outcome
Winter clothing	Aberdeen City Council, Revenues & Benefits	£130,000	£130,000	Considered a high priority for low income families with children
Discretionary Housing Payments	Aberdeen City Council, Revenues & Benefits	£100,000	£100,000	Considered a high priority for vulnerable people
Aberdeen Foyer Youth Hub	Aberdeen Foyer	£242,349	£0	Not considered a high priority for Cost of Living support
Christmas Panto Package	Aberdeen Performing Arts	£10,000 previously awarded	£10,000	Considered a high priority cultural and festive experience for low income families
Care and Repair Funding Officer	Aberdeen Care and Repair	£38,359	£38,359	Recognised this is a vulnerable group and a high priority
CAB Money Advice Outreach Project	Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau	£48,086	£0	Some funding is available through Fairer Aberdeen and there may be other sources available
Crisis Centre Services rent and energy costs	Aberdeen Cyrenians	£48,600	£48,600	Support for a vulnerable group, considered a high priority
The Caring Neighbourhood	Aberdeen Mosque & Islamic Centre SCIO	£23,400	£0	Not considered a high priority for Cost of Living support
No Child Should Go Without Opportunity	AberNecessities	£292,256	£161,113	Aspects of the proposal, clothing for teenagers and the Volunteer Coordinator considered to be a high priority
Infant formula	AberNecessities	£12,615 cost in 24-25	£14,129	AberNecessities have identified the need to provide formula directly, considered to be a high priority. Add 12% to cover inflation
Building Resilience in Torry	Bethany Christian Trust	£4,364	£4,364	Potentially a high impact on a vulnerable group, considered a high priority
Community Chaplaincy	Catalyst Transform - Catalyst Vineyard Church	£25,975	£0	Not considered a high priority for Cost of Living support
Food procurement, SAFE Team Outreach, Pantry Shops, Cash First Infant formula	CFINE on behalf of FPAA	£500,000 previously awarded	£378,435	Although a high proportion of the Fund, emergency food and the related longer term support is a high priority
Fuel debt and energy advice	SCARF	£95,000	£95,000	Fuel vouchers can be funded through other sources, but fuel debt is a high priority.
Poverty Awareness	SHMU	£20,000 previously awarded	£20,000	Considered a high priority to raise awareness and influence policy
St George's Community Centre	St George's Community Centre SCIO	£53,678	£0	Not considered a high priority for Cost of Living support.

APPENDIX 3 Aberdeen City Council Funded Organisations

The following organisations are funded by Aberdeen City Council from the Fairer Aberdeen Fund and Common Good Fund for anti-poverty and inequality related services and interventions.

Organisation	Fund	Purpose of funding
Aberdeen Care and Repair	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Care and Repair Funding Officer provides advice and financial assistance to older people, people with disabilities and people living in priority neighbourhoods, irrespective of tenure. FUNDED UP TO 2024-25. NO FUNDING AWARDED IN 2025.
Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	CAB Money Advice Outreach Project provides financial advice for clients living in priority neighbourhoods. FUNDED UP TO 2024-25. PARTIAL FUNDING AWARDED IN 2025.
	Common Good Fund	Core costs for Union Street office. FUNDED £337,033 PER YEAR IN 22-23, 23-24 & 24-25
Aberdeen Foyer	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Kings Trust Team Programme provides a personal, social and skills development programme for disadvantaged young people.
	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Foyer REACH provides a personal, social, wellbeing and employability skills development programme, aimed at participants who are in recovery from long term conditions.
	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Foyer Families provides an employability and personal development programme for parents facing multiple and complex barriers. FUNDED UP TO 2024-25. NOT APPLIED FOR IN 2025.
	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Foyer Futures supports a Youth Hub to provide young people aged 12–25 a supportive, trauma-informed environment at the Marywell Centre. NEW APPLICATION NOT PREVIOUSLY FUNDED
AberNecessities	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Winter Clothing to provide underprivileged children living in Aberdeen City with warm winter clothing, appropriate underwear and suitable shoes/trainers. AWARDED IN 2023-24. NO FUNDING AWARDED IN 2025.
CFINE	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	SAFE Team provides financial advice for food bank beneficiaries.
	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	Tackling Food Poverty and insecurity by improving and expanding access to free and low-cost food.
St George's Community Centre SCIO	Fairer Aberdeen Fund	St George's Community Centre provides a resource for community activity, supporting community capacity building and learning, tackles social isolation and loneliness, and provides activities, support and services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people. AWARDED IN 2024-25. NO FUNDING AWARDED IN 2025.

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	11 June 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Mapping of Aberdeen City Council Anti-Poverty and Inequality Services and Support
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/134
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Michelle Crombie, Strategic Lead. Prevention and Community Empowerment
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 3.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a high level overview of anti-poverty and inequality services and supports being delivered by the Council, and in partnership with public services, third sector and community organisations across Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the breadth of anti-poverty and inequality services and supports currently available from the Council and partner organisations to people in need across Aberdeen.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Tackling poverty and inequality is Aberdeen City Council's greatest priority, influencing all aspects of how we plan, design and deliver services to ensure fairness and inclusion for all citizens, especially those facing poverty and other inequalities. This includes prioritising resources for poverty prevention and reduction initiatives and ensuring equitable access to services.
- 3.2 During the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee Visit to AberNecessities on 29 January 2025, there was a discussion about the importance of the Council working together with the third sector to provide wrap around support for people in poverty. An action agreed following the visit was that a mapping of services delivered by the Council, and funded/ commissioned organisations, which support the prevention of poverty would be undertaken in order to understand the breadth of support available from Aberdeen City Council.
- 3.3 The document included in Appendix 1 provides a high level overview of the key services being delivered by the Council, and in partnership with public services, third sector and community organisations across Aberdeen, to support low income and marginalised communities and families. This includes organisations being commissioned or funded during 2025/26 via the Council's Common Good Fund, Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund, Local Environmental Action Fund, Scottish Government Free Period Products Fund, No One Left Behind Fund, Air Quality Action Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

- 3.4 Note that this is not an exhaustive list, as Council services may provide further anti-poverty and inequality services through external organisations by way of commissioning or grant funding, in conjunction with the corporate funds included in this document.
- 3.5 The services and supports have been grouped by the social determinants of health, which are the wide range of social and environmental factors that influence a person's health and wellbeing. Poverty is a significant and intertwined element which directly impacts an individual's access to resources and opportunities, leading to poorer outcomes.
- 3.6 Viewing council services and supports through the lens of social determinants of health helps demonstrate how the Council is not only responding to the immediate needs of vulnerable people, but tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality to improve the overall wellbeing of our citizens, families and communities.
- 3.7 The graphic on page three of the document (see below) provides a one page summary of the key Services provided directly by the Council, along with the total investment made in supporting the third sector to deliver services through key Council funding, as well as partnership working with Community Planning Aberdeen on priority outcomes. Note that the inclusion of services funded by the Cost of Living Fund 2025/26 is subject to the approval of Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee of the proposed allocations on 11 June 2025.



- 3.8 The document is intended to be informative and raise awareness of elected members and staff of the breadth of current services that have a role in preventing and mitigating against the impacts of poverty.

3.9 Next Steps

- 3.9.1 The document will provide the basis for further public facing communications on the range of anti-poverty and inequality services available to people and communities across Aberdeen through the Council and commissioned or funded organisations.
- 3.9.2 The Anti-Poverty Group will continue to explore opportunities for raising awareness of the broader range of support available across the wider public, private and third sector in Aberdeen, as well as improving coordination between providers.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	None	None	L	Yes
Compliance	None	None	L	Yes
Operational	None	None	L	Yes
Financial	None	None	L	Yes
Reputational	None	None	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	None	None	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	There is no proposal in this report

Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer People and Citizens Services on 15 May 2025.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Aberneecessities Visit Jan 2025.pdf](#)

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 Anti-Poverty and Inequality Services and Support June 2025

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Mapping of Anti-Poverty and Inequality Services and Support

June 2025



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Introduction

Tackling poverty and inequality is Aberdeen City Council's greatest priority, influencing all aspects of how we plan, design and deliver services to ensure fairness and inclusion for all citizens, especially those facing poverty and other inequalities.

This document provides a mapping of the key services being delivered by the Council, and in partnership with public services, third sector and community organisations across Aberdeen, to support low income and marginalised communities and families. This includes organisations being commissioned or funded during 2025/26 via the Council's Common Good Fund, Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund, Local Environmental Action Fund, Scottish Government Free Period Products Fund, No One Left Behind Fund, Air Quality Action Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The services and supports have been grouped by the social determinants of health, which are the wide range of social and environmental factors that influence a person's health and wellbeing. Poverty is a significant and intertwined element which directly impacts an individual's access to resources and opportunities, leading to poorer outcomes. Viewing Council services and supports through the lens of social determinants of health helps demonstrate how the Council is not only responding to the immediate needs of vulnerable people, but tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality in our communities.

The diagram overleaf provides a one page overview of this information, followed by further detail of the services provided.



Children, Families and Lifelong Learning	Economic Stability	Communities and Housing	Neighbourhood and Environment	Health and Social Care
Council Services				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Learning and Childcare • Schools and Education • Youth Work, Adult and Family Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real Living Wage Employment • ABZ Works • Benefits and Money Advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Learning and Development. • Future Library Model • Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place Planning • Home Energy Advice • Sustainable Food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Social Work • Educational Psychology • Healthy Minds
Council Spend on Commissioned and Funded Services 2025/26				
£690k	£3.2m	£502k	£577k	£425k
Working in Partnership with Community Planning Aberdeen				
Improvement priorities identified within the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26.				

Aberdeen City Council Services Tackling Poverty and Inequality

Social Determinant of Health and Poverty



Children, Families and Lifelong Learning



Economic Stability



Communities and Housing



Neighbourhood and Environment



Health and Social Care

Council Services



Early Learning and Childcare enable access to affordable childcare.



Real Living Wage Employment ensuring staff are paid the real living wage.



Community Learning and Development providing support to the communities that need it most.



Place Planning to improve access to public amenities, affordable transport and green space for all.



Children's Social Work protect and support families and children facing financial hardship.



Schools and Education offer free schools meals and clothing grants.



ABZ Works Employability, Skills and Community Enterprise Service.



Future Library Model provides supportive spaces in priority neighbourhoods.



Home Energy Advice and Support to reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills.



Educational Psychology empower children to achieve their potential, helping address the barriers poverty creates.



Youth Work, Adult and Family Learning providing life skills and opportunities for young people, adults and families.



Benefits and Money Advice Service providing free, impartial and confidential advice.



Housing providing affordable housing options and support services.



Sustainable Food supporting access to healthy, affordable food for all communities.



Healthy Minds recovery for adults with mental health illnesses, often linked to poverty.

Council Spend on Commissioned and Funded Services 2025/26

£690k

£3.2m

£502k

£577k

£425k

Working in Partnership with Community Planning Aberdeen

- Best Start
- Positive Destinations
- Additional Support Needs

- Employment and Employability

- Poverty Prevention
- Empowerment
- Homelessness

- Climate Change
- Active Travel
- Nature

- Community Justice
- Health and Social Care
- Drugs and Alcohol



Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Council Services

Early Learning and Childcare Service

The Early Learning and Childcare Service provides access to high-quality, affordable childcare, which can enable parents to work, train, or study, potentially leading to sustainable employment and a route out of poverty. The expanded provision, including more funded hours and flexible models, aims to address the poverty-related attainment gap.

Schools and Education

Schools support families in poverty by offering a range of services and initiatives, including financial assistance, welfare support, and targeted interventions to address the impact of poverty on pupil attainment using pupil equity funding. These include wiping off school meal debt, providing winter clothing grants, offering free breakfast clubs, free school meals and provision of IT for education.

Youth Work, Adult and Family Learning

The Community Learning and Development Service includes Youth Work which helps young people gain important life-skills and access to experiences that would usually be prohibitive because of cost. Youth work

improves attendance and engagement with learning, increases attainment, achievement and positive post school destinations. Adult Learning provide free classes and activities to support lifelong learning adult learners with a focus on literacy, digital learning and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Family Learning Services help meet physical needs via food, fuel, clothing and home essential vouchers or purchases, as well as provision of free experiences and opportunities for young people and families, particularly those from priority groups.

Funded and Commissioned Services

The following services are being financed by the Council's Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund, Free Period Products (Scottish Government) Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund during 2025/26. Total funding awarded = £689,949.

AberNecessities provide bundles of clothing for teenagers, carefully chosen to meet the individual needs of young people, providing dignity and opportunities to participate in activities with their peers. They also provide infant formula for disadvantaged families to meet the basic needs of a child in order to give them the best start possible start in life.

Aberdeen Foyer Kings Trust Team

Programme provides a personal, social and skills development programme for disadvantaged young people. Foyer REACH provides a personal, social, wellbeing and employability skills development programme, aimed at participants who are in recovery from long term conditions. In addition, Foyer Futures supports a Youth Hub to provide young people aged 12–25 a supportive environment at the Marywell Centre.

Aberdeen Performing Arts

provides a Christmas Family Pantomime Package for families living with deprivation who would otherwise not be able to attend a Christmas show.

Aberdeen Lads Club (ALC) provide youth work and the Big Bang Drumming Group which provides percussion workshops for young people in priority neighbourhoods.

Befriend A Child provides Youth Clubs for children who live in priority neighbourhoods. It also delivers a family support project to parents and carers struggling with hardship and social isolation in priority areas of Aberdeen.

CFINE provides cash first payments for infant formula and manages the distribution of free period products in schools, Council facilities and wider community venues on behalf of the Council.

Fersands Community Project Youth Work Support provides a wide range of youth work services to support and encourage young people to experience new activities, gain new skills, build relationships, and learn. The Family Centre supports vulnerable families in the community, providing support and advice on a wide range of issues.

Growing2gether builds positive health and wellbeing, skills and life chances of disadvantaged young people by connecting them as mentors to nursery children that experience social/personal/communication challenges in Lochside Academy, Northfield Academy and St Machars Academy.

Music 4 U provides a Community Youth Choir for young people in priority neighbourhoods.

Middlefield Community Project Youth Hub supports young people, especially those with low literacy skills and special needs that are not always picked up in the education system, and have low self-esteem and confidence. Provides positive adult support that meets their needs, challenging their view of the world, and supporting them to overcome barriers.

55th (Kincorth) Scout Group provides an outdoor event programme for young people unable to afford to participate.

Partnership Working

Children's Services Board

Community Planning Aberdeen's Children's Services Board take forward a range of multi-agency projects to support early intervention and prevention of poverty.

These include:

- Prevention of harm due to poverty and neglect
- Access to infant formula and nutritional support
- Benefits checks for parents of children under 5
- Dental health in priority neighbourhoods
- Youth safety in priority neighbourhoods
- Positive and sustained destinations for target groups
- Support for young carers





Economic Stability

Council Services

Real Living Wage Accredited Employer

Aberdeen City Council is an accredited living wage employer, paying the real living wage to their entire workforce. It is also working towards making Aberdeen a Living Wage City, encouraging other businesses to join the movement. For example, organisations receiving funding from the Council must be a living wage employer too.

ABZ Works Employability and Skills

ABZ Works is Aberdeen City Council's employability service, providing support to residents aged 16 to 67, including people from diverse groups with protected characteristics, to help them achieve their goals of progressing into employment, education, or training. It offers a range of programs and resources, including personalized action plans, one-on-one key worker support, training opportunities, and connections to other support services. The service provides seed funding for business start-up, paid work experience placements, and access to training. It delivers the People in Recovery Project delivered in partnership with Alcohol and Drugs Action and NHS Grampian to support people in recovery from

substance use to engage with employability services. It also works with HMP Grampian to support employability activity for prisoners who will be released to Aberdeen.

Benefits and Money Advice

The benefits and money advice service helps individuals and families experiencing poverty and inequality by providing free, confidential, and impartial advice on benefits, debt, and other financial issues. This includes maximising benefit entitlements, assisting with claiming and challenging decisions, and offering guidance on managing debts.

Funded and Commissioned Services

The following services are being financed by the Council's Common Good Fund, Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund, No One Left Behind (Scottish Government) Funding and UK Shared Prosperity Fund during 2025/26. Total funding awarded = £3,229,200.

Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau

CAB delivers services from its Union Street Office and its Money Advice Outreach Project provides financial advice for clients living in priority neighbourhoods.

Aberdeen Care and Repair, supports older people and unpaid carers, including those with a disability and/or long term health issues. Support is provided through home visits, to ensure people are claiming/ receiving their full benefit entitlement and to apply for charitable funding where appropriate.

Aberdeen Foyer provide holistic, multi stage employability programmes for young people aged 16-67. With a focus on supporting those who are at stage 1 and 2 of the employability pipeline, programmes provide personalised support through activities including exploring interests, confidence building, travel training and are designed to meet the needs of the person. Activities can include creative writing, drama, spoken word workshops, hands-on art, design, craft projects, photography, digital media, music and movement sessions, workshops on upcycling, woodworking, textiles, nature-based creativity and experiential outdoor learning. There is a focus on developing skills in the Care, Construction, Renewables and Hospitality sectors. Programmes take a whole-family approach and are tailored to meet the needs of different groups, including those involved in the Justice System.

Barnardos Multi-stage support for young people aged 16 -24, with dedicated keyworker and integrated, holistic support including job placement and in-work support. Supporting participants with mental health, digital skills and accessing community resources. Utilising the Mind and Pathways Outcome stars to help with targeted support. Also, a specific focus on the childcare sector, supporting parents and young people through sector-based skills programme 'Access to Childcare' gaining qualifications such as, Emergency Paediatric First Aid and REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene.

CFINE SAFE Team provides financial advice for food bank beneficiaries and outreach financial support. Outreach financial advice work provides a vital link for individuals facing food insecurity and poverty, with support such as benefits/welfare advice, household budgeting, and other support delivered in community settings. In addition, the Warehouse Skills Development programme provides employability support through warehouse-based vocational work experience and training.

Denis Law Legacy Trust supports increased volunteering numbers, supports volunteers into positive destinations, and supports the growth of the Streetsport programme.

North East Sensory Services (NESS) Employment Service provides an employment service to Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of Hearing people who live in Aberdeen City and are of working age.

North East Scotland College provides IT skills for employment, delivering a basic IT skills course for beginners as well as an International Certification of Digital Literacy (ICDL) qualification for those who already have basic IT skills.

Pathways employability programme supports residents of regeneration/ priority areas into employment by providing tailored support for people from the first stages of job seeking through to securing and maintaining employment. Employment Support Fund supports people to overcome the barriers back into employment, providing training, travel and clothing for interviews.

Pitman Training provide an English course is for anyone looking to improve their fluency and ability in speaking, writing, reading and listening, and is suitable for participants who are beginners to more advanced. Participants must not currently be enrolled in an ESOL course with Adult Learning or NESCOL.

Station House Media Unit

SHMU delivers a range of training and employability programmes directly in communities through a combination of media training and traditional employability provision. This approach engages participants in creative and practical ways, building transferable skills, resilience, and confidence while addressing barriers to progression. It provides community media development, supporting residents in priority areas of the city and communities of interest in radio and video production, traditional and on-line publications, music production and digital inclusion. Services are tailored to support vulnerable individuals facing complex needs and barriers, including those who are justice experienced, impacted by substance use, experiencing mental health challenges, from asylum and refugee communities, have disabilities or are suffering from social isolation.

Tre-Life provide a 12-week creativity programme for people aged 16-67 to support participants on their first steps into employability activities, also incorporating budgeting and mental health and wellbeing. Activities are based around clients' interests such as learning to play guitar, role play, creative writing, crocheting and knitting, upcycling, digital media, cooking or baking or escape room challenges. Participants are included in an enterprise unit to look at environmental issues and also have the

opportunity to gain a Personal Development Award qualification. Tre-Life also deliver a hospitality sector employability programme and volunteering programme for 16-24 year olds who are unemployed or not in full-time education. Support is provided for people to overcome barriers in relation to their wellbeing, budgeting and where necessary, support for those in need of ESOL.

St Machar Credit Union

St Machar Credit Union provides access to affordable financial services and products, reducing the need for payday loans or doorstep lending.

Silver Surfers

Silver City Surfers provides one to one computer tutoring for over 55s in the City Centre and priority neighbourhoods, so they can confidently learn how to use the computer and surf the internet safely in a welcoming and social environment.

SAMH provide a personalised employability and personal development program for people that have physical and/or mental health barriers. The course includes mental health assessments, wellness action plans, and workshops on personal development, resilience, and progression, along with external activities, guest speakers, and employer engagement.

Values into Action provide one to one support for individuals who have a disability, additional support needs or neurodivergent conditions. Confidence building, CV building, supported job searching and interview skills, and volunteering/work placement or work trial.

WorkingRite provide one to one support and coaching, opportunities for people aged 16-26, who are care experienced, unemployed and not in education to develop work readiness skills and achieve an SQA qualification. Fully mentored and individually matched work placements leading to employment, apprenticeship, further learning or another outcome that is right for each individual.

Partnership Working

Aberdeen Prospers Group

Community Planning Aberdeen Prospers Group take forward a range of multi-agency projects to support fair employment for priority groups.

- Real living wage employment
- Ethnic minorities
- Priority neighbourhoods
- Over 50s
- Young Parents
- Business Start-Ups
- Volunteering

Local Employability Partnership

A sub group of Aberdeen Prospers, the Local Employability Partnership brings together various agencies, organisations, and partners to plan and implement employability services.





Communities and Housing

Council Services

Community Learning and Development

The service supports and works with communities to address poverty and inequality through various initiatives that enhance skills, promote social inclusion and provide essential support services. Community development, community funding and locality planning help create a positive environment where individuals can thrive and access the support they need. Learning centres and leased community centres play a vital role in communities to address poverty and provide public warm spaces.

Future Library and Information Service

The Aberdeen Future Libraries model aims to help those in poverty by ensuring libraries are accessible and supportive community spaces, particularly in areas with high poverty rates. This is achieved through various initiatives, including improving accessibility, offering digital literacy programs, providing free access to online resources, and creating inclusive community spaces.

Housing

Affordable housing provision for people in need through social rent housing, working with developers to ensure a mix of affordable housing options and providing a low-cost home ownership scheme. The Council provides temporary accommodation and resettlement support for those experiencing homelessness. Housing support services help Council tenants manage their tenancy and develop independent living skills, and access benefits like Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. People experiencing poverty are supported through various means including discretionary housing payments, the Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants, care grants, rent assistance fund and council tax reduction.

Funded and Commissioned Services

The following services are being financed by the Council's Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund during 2025/26. Total funding awarded = £502,323.

Aberdeen Cyrenians provide a wide range of services from their community hub to provide practical support to individuals and communities in need. They work to prevent homelessness, provide early intervention, and support people into secure housing, while also addressing issues like conflict management, employment, and community integration.

Aberdeen Lads Club provides community learning and development services, including adult learning, and community capacity building.

Fersands Community Project provides community learning and development services, including childcare, youth work, adult learning, parent and family support, and community capacity building.

Instant Neighbour support low-income individuals and families in Aberdeen by providing essential reused furniture at affordable prices, foodbank services, and employment opportunities.

Mastrick Community Council Boards & Beans is a community café initiative in Mastrick Community Centre.

Middlefield Community Project provides community learning and development services, including childcare, youth work, adult learning, parent and family support, and community capacity building.

No Recourse North East (NRNE) Partnership

The partnership works together to tackle and prevent destitution experienced by people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), including asylum seekers.

Printfield Community Project provides a resource for community activity, supporting community capacity building and learning, tackles social isolation and loneliness, and provides activities, support and services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

The Kings Community Centre addresses poverty through various initiatives, including providing foodbanks, offering support for homelessness and addiction, and supporting women and families. They also focus on education, training, and employment opportunities, including providing workspace and financial assistance

Tillydrone Community Campus provides a resource for community activity, supporting community capacity building and learning, tackles social isolation and loneliness, and provides activities, support and services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Tillydrone Community Flat provides a resource for community activity, supporting community capacity building and learning, tackles social isolation and loneliness, and provides activities, support and services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people, including complimentary health sessions to promote wellbeing.

Station House Media Unit (SHMU) poverty awareness raising using a variety of media help people understand the effects of poverty on individuals and provoke communities to think about how they can help.

Partnership Working

Community Planning Aberdeen's Communities and Housing Groups:

Anti-Poverty Group

Community Planning Aberdeen's Anti-Poverty Group takes forward a range of multi-agency projects to prevent and mitigate the impacts of poverty.

- Home Energy Efficiency
- Fuel Poverty
- Cash first approach to food security
- Financial assessment and benefit uptake

Community Empowerment Group

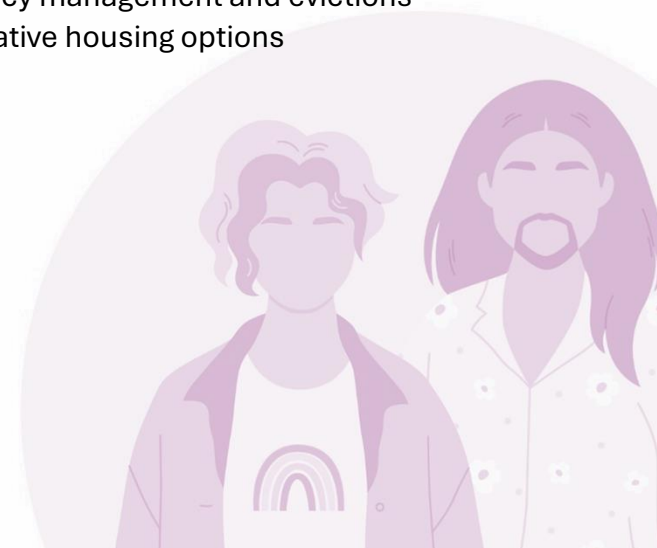
Community Planning Aberdeen's Community Empowerment Group leads on projects which support individuals and groups to actively participate in making improvements in their community. These include:

- Children and young people participation
- Testing of community ideas
- Diverse community involvement
- Funding for community organisations
- Capacity building for community groups

Homewards Steering Group

Community Planning Aberdeen's Homewards Steering Group aims to end homelessness in Aberdeen by taking forward projects which make it rare, brief and unrepeated. These include:

- Changing public perceptions of homelessness
- Joint working with the private sector
- Engaging people with lived experience
- Pathways for young people
- Tenancy management and evictions
- Innovative housing options





Neighbourhood and Environment

Council Services

Place Planning

The Council supports individuals, communities and organisations to shape their local areas through plans including Net Zero Aberdeen, Local Development Plan, Locality Plans and Local Place Plans. Place Planning tackles poverty by building local community needs into place, climate & nature plans - such as reducing fuel poverty and flood risk, access to essential healthcare, education, transport, food and the outdoors. It can promote the development of affordable housing options and community facilities as well as support initiatives that create employment opportunities and promote health and wellbeing.

Public and Passenger Transport

The Council provides a range of public and passenger transport services to ensure that everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or location, can access essential services and amenities. It promotes the availability of free or discounted bus travel for people aged 5-21, over 60, and those with disabilities. The Community Transport Service also provides a door to door service for the elderly and disabled.

Walking and cycling is encouraged through the bike hire scheme and provision of cycle shelters in housing developments.

Sustainable Food

The Council develops and promotes sustainable food activity to increase access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food. It encourages community food growing, particularly in areas facing socio-economic challenges. Services include providing grants and support for community garden projects, creating new allotments and expanding existing ones, working with local schools to integrate food growing into the curriculum and supporting the growth of the local food economy.

Home Energy Advice and Support

The Home Energy Service provides information, support, and assistance to residents, particularly those in council-owned properties and older tenements, to reduce fuel poverty by making homes warmer and reducing energy costs. The Council also helps people with fuel costs by providing Winter Fuel Payments and works with organisations like Aberdeen Heat & Power and Scarf to support those in crisis.

Funded and Commissioned Services

The following services are being financed by the Council's Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund, Local Environmental Action Fund, Air Quality Action (Scottish Government) Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund during 2025/26. Total funding awarded = £577,439.

CFINE supports the Council to tackle food poverty and insecurity by improving and expanding access to free and low-cost food as well as providing financial advice through its safe team. CFine leads Food Poverty Action Aberdeen (FPAA), which is a partnership of organisations providing support to individuals experiencing food poverty. It manages food procurement and distribution to Food Poverty Action Aberdeen members and community venues. It also supports Granite City Good Food (GCGF), a food partnership hosted by CFINE which brings communities and organisations together to increase the accessibility of sustainable food.

Community Outreach Group

(COG) provides support to homeless and vulnerable people in Aberdeen, offering meals, essentials, and a safe space for conversation and games. They also provide information, signposting to other services, and help with applications.

Enterprise Car Club offers a more affordable and accessible alternative to car ownership. The Council funds the provision of cars in priority neighbourhoods Northfield, Mastrick, Tillydrone, Middlefield and Torry to reduce social exclusion for those who may not be able to afford a car or other transportation.

North East Scotland Climate Action Network (NESCOAN)

administers the Local Environmental Action Fund on behalf of Aberdeen City Council. The fund provides grants for projects that provide environmental improvements, support nature recovery, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support local communities, particularly marginalised, minority or disadvantaged communities. NESCOAN provides training and resources to help communities develop and implement their projects and connect with other groups.

SCARF tackle fuel poverty by addressing debt through direct and discretionary payments to relieve immediate financial stress for households, helping pay for essential services and other pressing costs. Includes energy efficiency advice and referrals to relevant partner organisations for wider support.

Partnership Working

Sustainable City Group

Community Planning Aberdeen's Sustainable City Group leads multi-agency projects to improve local spaces and reduce transport poverty.

- Local resilience plans
- Active travel
- Green space
- Environmental improvements

Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships

Community Planning Aberdeen's community led partnership groups oversee the development and delivery of the North, South and Central Locality Plans. Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships are in place to support local people from SIMD 1 areas to engage in place planning.





Health and Social Care

Council Services

Children's Social Work

The Children's Social Work Service is responsible for protecting and supporting vulnerable children and families, including those who have been involved in child protection processes or are at risk of harm. They provide advocacy, guidance, and support to families and children facing financial hardship, often providing direct assistance, access to resources, and connecting families with relevant services. They help create safer and more stable environments for children by assessing risk, protecting vulnerable individuals, and supporting parents in building stronger family relationships. This includes support for young carers.

Educational Psychology

The educational psychology service uses psychology to improve wellbeing, support life-long learning and empower children and young people to achieve their potential. Working with families, schools, and other support services they provide interventions that help address the unique challenges and barriers to learning and development that poverty can create to improve the well-being and educational outcomes of children.

Healthy Minds

Community Learning and Development Healthy Minds Service provides learning opportunities, promoting recovery for adults with enduring mental health illnesses. Research shows that people dealing with poverty are more likely to have a mental health problem and people with mental health problems are more likely to face poverty. The Healthy Minds Team encourage participation in community activities and offer support to build confidence, resilience and meet other needs related to mental well-being.

Funded and Commissioned Services

The following services are being financed by the Council's Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund during 2025/26. Total funding awarded = £425,128.

Aberdeen Science Centre Science of Mental Health & Wellbeing delivers a Mental Health and Wellbeing programme to support adults to increase their understanding of mental health, wellbeing and nutrition and the links between these.

Bethany Christian Church provide person centred support for women in Torry who have various issues including domestic violence, mental health issues, family support, and isolation. Offering practical help and advocacy support, and linking them to appropriate support services.

Grampian Women's Aid helps individuals experiencing poverty by providing various services, including housing and benefits advice, safety planning, and access to other support services. They also offer temporary refuge accommodation and support to rebuild self-esteem and confidence.

Home-Start Aberdeen provides home visiting support to 30 families with at least one child under the age of 5 identified as at risk and hard to reach in the seven regeneration areas of the city, working to prevent further crisis and family breakdown.

Mental Health Aberdeen provides free counselling services addressing all mental health issues within Calsayseat surgery and Torry Medical Practice. Youth Counselling provide a counselling and information service for young people.

Pathways to wellbeing programme provides immediate access to a locally based generic counselling service, improving mental health in the community through the delivery of a point of need counselling service with easy access and minimal waiting times.

Police Scotland Operation Begonia provides dedicated, directed patrols with the aim of tackling prostitution; by encountering, identifying and engaging with sex industry workers and offering safety advice and fast track appointments to key partners who can assist to address the causes leading to the behaviour.

Printfield Community Project feel good programme provides Complimentary Health sessions to promote relaxation and wellbeing.

STAR Community Flat provides a resource for community activity, supporting community capacity building and learning, tackles social isolation and loneliness, and provides activities, support and services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Tillydrone Community Flat health and wellbeing project provides complimentary health sessions to promote relaxation and wellbeing.

Partnership Working

Community Planning Aberdeen's Health and Social Care Partnership Groups:

Resilient, Included Supported Group

Community Planning Aberdeen's Resilient, Included Supported Group takes forward a range of multi-agency projects to reduce inequality in life expectancy across Aberdeen.

- Mental health
- Support for carers
- Healthy behaviours
- Cancer screening
- Chronic illness

Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

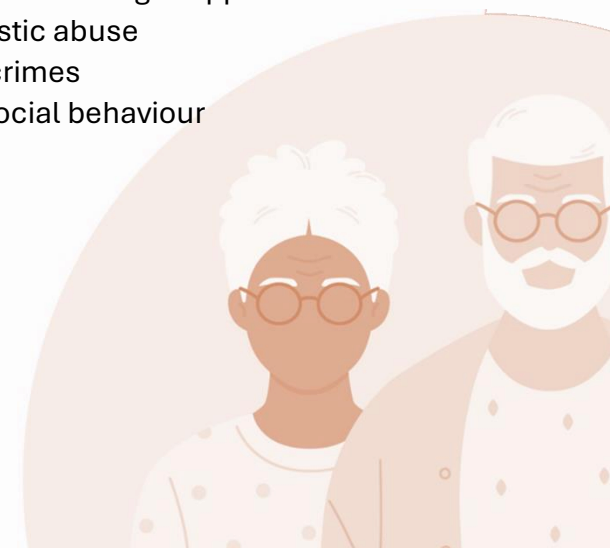
Community Planning Aberdeen's Alcohol and Drugs Partnership leads projects to prevent harms often linked to poverty.

- Early intervention and prevention of harm for young people
- Drinking in pregnancy
- Outreach and recovery support for people in priority neighbourhoods
- Naloxone distribution

Community Justice Group

Community Planning Aberdeen's Community Justice Group takes forward projects which aim to reduce crime and improve outcomes and equality of opportunity for people involved in the justice system.

- Employability support
- Housing support
- Alcohol and Drugs support
- Domestic abuse
- Hate crimes
- Anti-social behaviour



Services by Council Functions

Families and Communities	City Regeneration & Environment	Corporate Services
Early Learning and Childcare Service Contact Louise Beaton Service Manager, Early Years	ABZ Works Employability and Skills Contact Angela Taylor Team Leader, Employability and Skills	Benefits and Money Advice Contact Angela Kazmierczak Financial Inclusion Team Leader
Schools and Education Contact Shona Milne Chief Officer, Education and Lifelong Learning	Place Planning Contact Claire McArthur Policy and Strategy Manager	Contact Steve MacRae Benefits Processing Manager
Community Learning and Development: Youth Work, Adult and Family Learning, Community Development, Community and Learning Centres, Healthy Minds Contact Colin Wright Community Learning & Development Manager	Contact Sinclair Laing Climate and Environment Policy Manager	Fairer Aberdeen Fund Contact Susan Thoms Fairer Aberdeen & Anti-Poverty Manager
Future Library and Information Service Contact Margaret Stewart Service Manager, Libraries and Community Learning	Public and Passenger Transport Contact Chris Cormack Team Leader, Public Transport Unit	Community Planning Contact Allison Swanson Community Planning & Improvement Manager
Housing Contact Jacqui McKenzie Chief Officer, Housing	Sustainable Food Contact Steven Shaw Environmental Manager	Locality Planning Contact Jade Leyden Locality Planning & Community Development Manager
Children's Social Work Contact Alison McAlpine Lead Service Manager, Children's Social Work and Family Support	Home Energy Advice and Support Contact Mark Shaw Senior Energy Officer	Equalities Contact Baldeep McGarry Diversity & Inclusion Lead
Educational Psychology Emma Powell Principal Educational Psychologist		

Commissioned and Funded Organisations

The Council will fund 45 organisations during 2025/26 for services tackling poverty and inequality via the Council's Common Good Fund, Cost of Living Fund, Fairer Aberdeen Fund, Local Environmental Action Fund, Scottish Government Free Period Products Fund, No One Left Behind Fund, Air Quality Action Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Aberdeen Care and Repair	North East Scotland Climate Action
Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau	Network (NESCOAN)
Aberdeen Cyrenians	North East Sensory Services
Aberdeen Foyer	North East Scotland College
Aberdeen Lads Club	No Recourse North East (NRNE)
Aberdeen Performing Arts	Partnership
Aberdeen Science Centre	Pathways
AberNecessities	Pitman Training
Barnardos	Police Scotland
Befriend A Child	Printfield Community Project
Bethany Christian Church	SAMH
CFINE	SCARF Enterprises Scotland
Community Outreach Group	Silver City Surfers
Denis Law Legacy Trust	St Machar Credit Union
Enterprise	Star Flat
Fersands Community Project	Station House Media Unit (SHMU)
Grampian Women's Aid	The Kings Community Centre
Growing2gether	Tillydrone Community Campus
Home-Start Aberdeen	Tillydrone Community Flat
Instant Neighbour	Tre-Life
Mastrick Community Council	Values into Action Scotland
Mental Health Aberdeen	WorkingRite
Middlefield Community Project	55th (Kincorth) Scout Group
Music 4 U	

Community Planning Aberdeen

Council lead Outcome Improvement Groups

Anti-Poverty Group

Chaired by Michelle Crombie
Strategic Lead, Prevention and Community Empowerment

Aberdeen Prospers

Vice Chair Julie Wood
Chief Officer, City Development and Regeneration

Children's Services Board

Chaired by Graeme Simpson
Chief Officer, Children's Social Work and Family Support

Sustainability City Group

Vice Chair Sinclair Laing
Climate and Environment Policy Manager

Community Empowerment Group

Chaired by Michelle Crombie
Strategic Lead, Prevention and Community Empowerment

Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships

Chaired by Jade Leyden
Locality Planning and Community Development Manager

Further Information

For further information about any of the services listed in this document or for general enquiries please contact:

Fairer Aberdeen and Anti-Poverty Team

faireraberdeenfund@aberdeencity.gov.uk

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	11 June 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Draft Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/135
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Martin Barry, Engagement Partner, Scottish Enterprise
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 3.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the Regional Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the Draft Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Living Wage Places scheme is administered by Living Wage Scotland. Any place can join the scheme provided the relevant Local Authority is an accredited Living Wage employer. Aberdeen City Council achieved accreditation in 2017.
- 3.2 In November 2022 the Community Planning Aberdeen Board approved the Making Aberdeen a Real Living Wage City Action Plan 2022-2025. Within the action plan was a commitment to encourage Aberdeenshire-based employers to become accredited Real Living Wage employers and promote a culture of regional collaboration. Following the accreditation of Aberdeenshire Council as a Real Living Wage employer in October 2023, the Aberdeen Living Wage Action Group agreed that their subsequent three year action plan should be extended to include Aberdeenshire. Accreditation in either Local Authority area can benefit employees in the other given the two-way travel to work flows in the region.
- 3.3 The Making Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-28 continues to promote the real Living Wage as agreed from 1 April 2025 (£12.60 per hour), rather than the UK Government National Living Wage (£11.44 per hour). It also continues to seek employer accreditations to the Real Living Wage in order to gain wage uplifts for those earning less than the current Real Living Wage hourly rate of £12.60 per hour. Ensuring retention of the current accreditation network given the current cost pressures on employers across the private and third sectors will also be a priority.

- 3.4 The Action Plan supports and aligns to the objective within the Regional Economic Strategy, published in February 2024, to become a Real Living Wage region with 95% of overall employment offering a Real Living Wage or higher. It also supports delivery of the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan Stretch Outcome 2 which seeks to increase employer sign up to the Real Living Wage by 5% year on year and achieve Real Living Wage City Status by 2026. Increasing household income as a result of real living wage uplifts will help ensure a reduction in both in-work and child poverty levels in the City.
- 3.5 The targets within the Real Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-28 will be reviewed annually to ensure appropriateness and net growth in both accreditation and uplift numbers.

3.6 Next Steps

- 3.6.1 The Making Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire a Real Living Wage Place Action Plan will be presented to the Community Planning Aberdeen Board and Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board for approval in June 2025.
- 3.6.2 The action plan will be formally launched from 23 June 2025 via a press release from Living Wage Scotland, and various social media posts. Further engagement with employers to promote the benefits of Real Living Wage accreditation to them and their employees, alongside general promotion of the project, will continue.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Closer working with Aberdeenshire Council could help realise efficiency in the longer term.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risk identified.	N/A	L	Yes

Compliance	No significant risk identified.	N/A	L	Yes
Operational	Failure to secure support from wider stakeholders	Cross Council and partner working group established to develop and deliver action plan. Key policy driver for the Regional Economic Strategy.	L	Yes
Financial	No significant risk identified.	N/A	L	Yes
Reputational	Failure to achieve Real Living Wage City status	Cross Council and partner working group established to develop and deliver action plan.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No environmental risks identified	N/A	n/a	n/a

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The proposals in this report support delivery of the Partnership's Policy Statement:</p> <p>Work with the city's universities, North East Scotland College and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities, going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and apprenticeships.</p>
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>Stretch outcome 1: 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 2: 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
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Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer People and Citizens Services on 15 May 2025.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Aberdeen - A Real Living Wage City Action Plan 2022-2025](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Making Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire a Living Wage Place Action Plan 2025-2028

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Martin Barry
Title	Engagement Partner, Scottish Enterprise
Email Address	martin.barry@scotent.co.uk

The real Living Wage for the real cost of living

MAKING ABERDEEN & ABERDEENSHIRE A LIVING WAGE PLACE

Action Plan

2025-2028



**Community
Planning
Aberdeen**



**Aberdeenshire
Community Planning Partnership**

INTRODUCTION

This is the 3-year action plan to support Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire's commitment to the **real** Living Wage. This plan builds on the initial Aberdeen City action plan launched in 2022, which set out an ambition to expand the project into Aberdeenshire upon the accreditation of Aberdeenshire Council as a real Living Wage employer, which was achieved in October 2023.

This plan will support them objective of the North East of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy (RES) to become a real Living Wage region with 95% of overall employment offering a real living wage or higher. It will also support the Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIP) in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire by helping to tackle and reduce poverty, support the best quality of life, and make it a place where everyone can prosper.

The initial project in Aberdeen has already made good progress in encouraging employers to formally achieve their real Living Wage accreditation – and with a strong baseline in Aberdeenshire – this plan will seek to increase those numbers and uplift more people in both geographies onto real Living Wage rates.

APPLICANT

The application for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire to be recognised as a real Living Wage Place is made on behalf of the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Living Wage Action Group – with the endorsement of Community Planning Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership, the local partnerships of public, private and third sector organisations and communities working together to improve lives across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

THE PLACE

The geography of the Place will be the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council local authority areas as shown in the map opposite. The two Local Authorities are also collectively known, and brand, as “North East Scotland”. For the purposes of this plan, references to the “North East” and “North East (of) Scotland” should be read as Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

The two local authorities work alongside other partners as part of the North East Scotland Regional Economic Partnership which monitors delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy.

"Being paid a real Living Wage makes me feel valued by the business. It's reassuring to know my hard work is recognised, and having a bit more income really improves my day-to-day life and living standards in these difficult times." **Stuart, Retail employee**



(Source: openstreetmap.com)

THE REAL LIVING WAGE AND THE MAKING LIVING WAGE PLACES SCHEME

The real Living Wage is an independently calculated rate based on the cost of living and is paid voluntarily by employers. The rate is currently £12.60 (£13.85 in London) and is calculated annually by The Resolution Foundation on an analysis of the wage that employees (18+) need to earn in order to afford the basket of goods required for a decent standard of living. This basket of goods includes housing, childcare, transport, and heating costs.

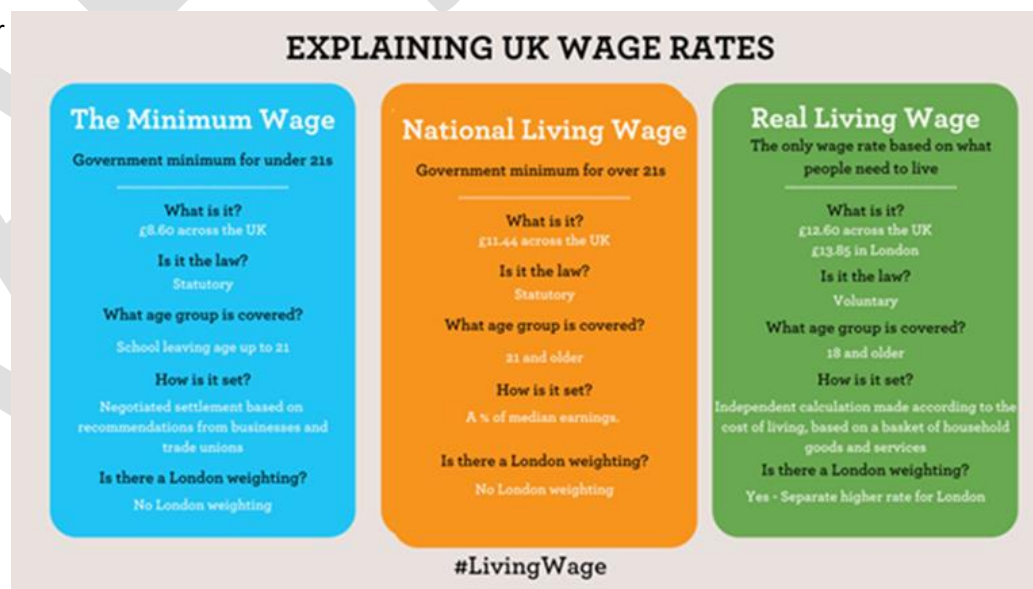
The real Living Wage is different to the UK government's national living wage which is not calculated according to what employees need to live on.

Living Wage Scotland was launched in April 2014 with the aim of increasing the number of employers in Scotland who are recognised for paying their staff the real Living Wage. Established by the Poverty Alliance, Living Wage Scotland works in partnership with the Living Wage Foundation and is funded by the Scottish Government. Businesses who commit to paying the real Living Wage to all their staff and have a plan to pay the wage to all contractors can become an accredited Living Wage employer as part of the scheme administered by Living Wage Scotland.

The Living Wage Places project puts the real Living Wage at the heart of local debates around more inclusive economies. The model celebrates local employer Action Groups for achieving recognition for a commitment to Making a Living Wage Place.

It provides an opportunity for employers from the public, private and third sector to work collaboratively to address in-work poverty to re-build identity and prosperity within their local communities. The real Living Wage & government minimum statutory wage rates are shown opposite.

"The real Living Wage makes me feel valued, it does make a difference due to the cost of things like petrol, and the cost of everything in general. If people are getting paid more, they'll enjoy working more as well". Sarah, Retail employee



Source: Living Wage Foundation (Rates at November 2024)

KEY STATISTICS

Population (2022)

Region	Aberdeenshire (1)	Aberdeen City (2)	Scotland (3)
487,900*	263,900*	224,000*	5,436,600*

(Source: 1 – Aberdeenshire Council; 2 – Aberdeen City Council; 3-scotlandscensus.gov.uk (* - Estimate)

Employment

	Region	Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen City	Scotland
Working age	308,800	160,000 (60.8%)	148,300 (67.0%)	3,440,192
Economically active	281,100	149,400 (85.2%)	131,700 (81.2%)	2,729,000
Economically active - Male	144,200	83,300 (87.9%)	60,900 (83.3%)	1,386,000
Economically active - Female	136,900	66,100 (81.9%)	70,800 (79.4%)	1,344,000
Employment rate		83.6%	75.9%	74.8%
Unemployment rate		2.0%	3.7%	4.4%

(Source: Nomis – Labour Market Profiles – Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Scotland – Oct 23- Sep 24) NOTE: Employment rates not available at regional level.

Earnings by place of residence (2024)

	Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen City	Scotland
Gross weekly – Full time	783.90	721.70	740.00
Male full time	826.01	736.70	767.70
Female full time	696.50	708.00	701.00

(Source: Nomis – Labour Market Profiles – Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Scotland)

Poverty (Child poverty defined as children in families earning below 60% of the median income after housing costs)

	Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen City
Child poverty rates (2022)	16% (1)	20.5% (2)
Number of Children living in poverty (estimated) (3)	8,799	7,994

(Source: 1- Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership; 2 - Community Planning Aberdeen; 3 - End Child Poverty Coalition 2021/22)

WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 211 accredited real Living Wage employers headquartered in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire (as at 1st April 2025)
- 63,782 employed by those accredited employers
- 79% of those 63,782 workers are employed by the 6 largest accredited employers in the region
- 2,753 local workers have been uplifted on to real Living Wage by Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire headquartered accredited employers
- 72.4% of the accredited real Living Wage employers in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire each employ less than 50 staff.

The specific breakdown for each Authority of the regional figures is as below

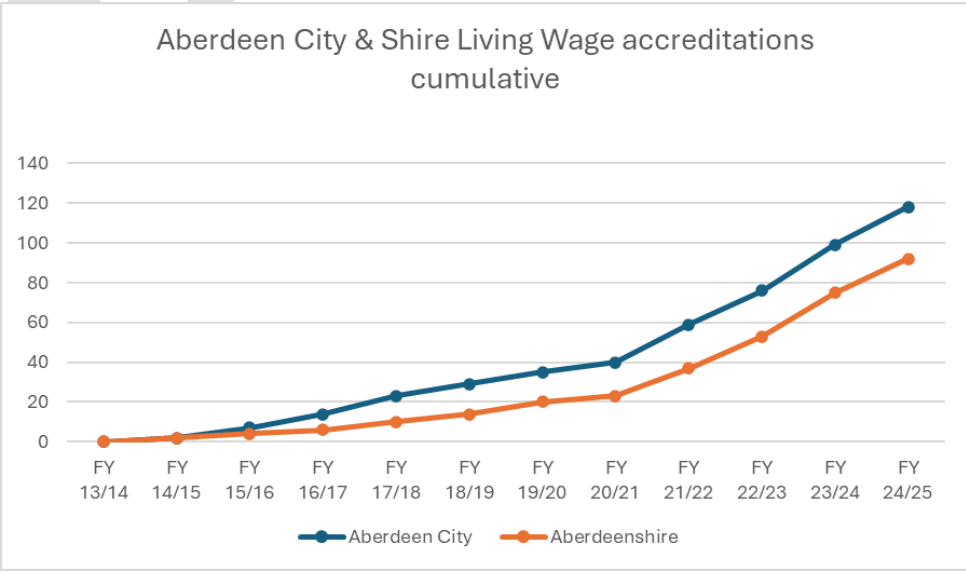
	Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen City
Accredited employers	95	116
Employees covered	20,036	43,746
Uplifts	762	1,991*

(*Figure does not take into account the uplift figures of Aberdeen-based First Bus given the large number spread across the UK following their accreditation)

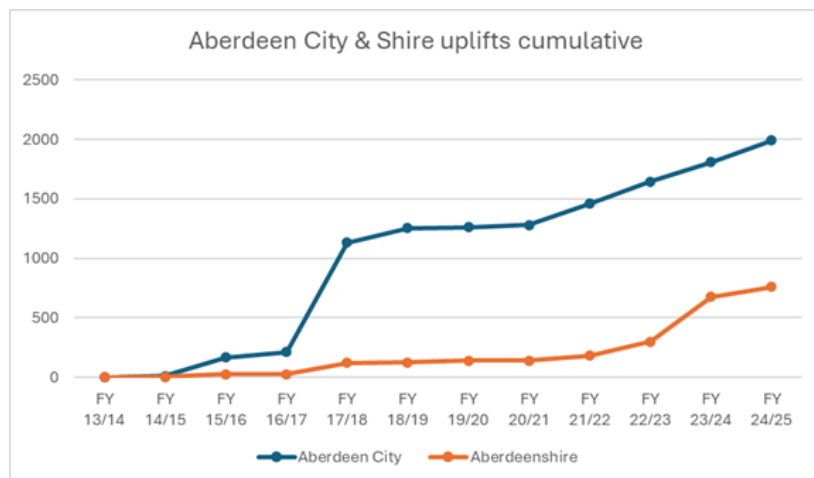
In April 2025, 116 businesses headquartered in Aberdeen, and 95 headquartered in Aberdeenshire were accredited real Living Wage employers (LWEs).

The local Action Group for Aberdeen City was established in 2022. Previously, a working group aligned to the Aberdeen Prospers Outcome Improvement Group of Community Planning Aberdeen had been developing and testing change ideas to further the aim of increasing employer sign up to the real Living Wage and to develop an action plan to join the Living Wage Places scheme.

As shown in the graph opposite, there has been steady growth in the number of accredited employers since the establishment of the Living Wage movement, particularly in the post-Covid period when more active promotion of the real Living Wage was taking place with the establishment of the Aberdeen City Place project.



As a result, we have also seen an increase of 28% in the number of employees wages uplifted to the real Living Wage since 2019, as shown below. The biggest increase came in 2016-17 when Aberdeen City Council became an accredited employer, and we have seen a marked upward trend since 2020-21.



This action plan will seek to provide a continued focus on the real Living Wage and will look to continue the upward trend in both accreditations and uplifts across a range of sectors, and our targets for both are set out in the “Measuring success” section of the plan.

The initial Living Wage action plan for Aberdeen contained an action to engage with employers in Aberdeenshire given the large travel to work area, whilst maintaining an ambition to develop a regional plan upon Aberdeenshire Council achieving their accreditation, which they did in October 2023.

This action plan will align with the North East Scotland Regional Economic Strategy which was published in February 2024.

The objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy reflect both the goals of good economic growth through diversification and ensuring that growth is equitably distributed amongst all people in the region.

One of the Strategy’s main objectives is to “become a Real living Wage region with 95% of overall employment offering a real living wage or higher.”



“Before I worked for my employer I had a Zero Hours contract, I didn’t have a strong sense of future or any true stability. Through my employer’s commitment to the real Living Wage and real Living hours, I have been able to buy a house and consider starting a family. Something that previously, I wouldn’t have been able to do. It has given me financial stability. Seeing the pride and commitment that my employer has to being a real Living Wage employer, makes me proud to work for them.” **Robert, Manufacturer employee**

LIVING HOURS

Payment of the real Living Wage remains a fundamental part of the solution to in-work poverty; however, the shape of low-paid work has changed.

Security of hours is the other side of the coin when it comes to solving in-work poverty.

Precarious work disproportionately affects our lowest-paid workers in industries such as retail, health and social care. Research from the Living Wage Foundation in August 2023 concluded that over 9% of workers in Scotland are in insecure work and paid below the Living Wage - approximately 250,000 workers. This is why we welcome the commitment from the Scottish Government to support the delivery of the Living Hours accreditation programme, launched by the Living Wage Foundation in 2019.

The Living Hours programme builds upon the existing Living Wage accreditation. Employers who join the scheme commit to providing:

- at least 4 weeks' notice for every shift, with guaranteed payment if shifts are cancelled within this notice period.
- a guaranteed minimum of 16 working hours every week (unless the worker requests otherwise)
- a contract that accurately reflects hours worked

This action plan will now contain a target to increase Living Hours accreditation across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

"My employer giving me a chance was a huge relief for my household. Before, I worried about getting back into work, but now that worry is gone. Even with 6 hours a week, I was happy, but the extra 10 hours making it 16 is fantastic! It helps with bills, unexpected expenses, and makes life less stressful. Hopefully, I'll save enough for driving lessons. It also gets me out of the house and interacting with others. Everyone at my employer has been so helpful and welcoming. I feel like I've been here forever, and it's a great feeling." **Grace, Charity employee**



Living Hours

ECONOMIC & STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- **Historically a prosperous economy, but not everyone has benefitted**
- **Approximately 1 in 5 children living in poverty in Aberdeen. Less in Aberdeenshire overall, but pockets of deprivation evident, particularly on the Buchan coast where rates in parts of Fraserburgh and Peterhead are higher than in the City**
- **High wage sectors sit alongside traditionally low paid that employ significant numbers of people**
- **Much of Aberdeenshire economy dominated by the rural sector**
- **Economy in transition – but this brings opportunity for increased Fair Work**
- **Cost of living putting increased pressures on household incomes, but employers also dealing with rising costs which are existential in some cases**

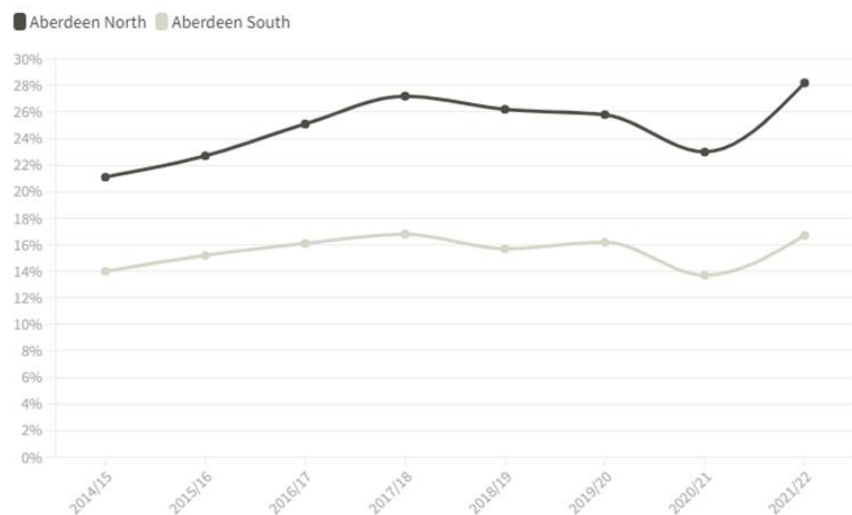
At the publication of the initial Action Plan for Aberdeen City in 2022, employers were still very much in recovery mode from the implications of the Covid pandemic. This was followed by inflationary pressures, supply and labour shortages all leading to increased costs in a world where uncertainty is the norm and, at the time of writing, showed no sign of changing. Whilst the basis of this Action Plan is to work towards ensuring people earn a fair day's pay for a hard day's work, sustainability is key and we want to work with employers to help them weather economic storms by showing the benefits of a valued workforce.

The economy of North East Scotland has undoubtedly benefited from its role as the oil and gas capital of Europe since the 1970s. The economy has performed strongly over that time, and some have prospered from high wages driven by a sector that, in the main, has been buoyant over the decades. This has led to perceptions, both internally and externally, that “the streets are paved with gold”. However, the truth is quite far removed from that perception, with large amounts of the population having never benefitted directly from the wider prosperity but impacted by a high cost of living driven over the years by a relatively small proportion of high earners. There are pockets of deprivation in across the region that are not always recognised – particularly in the north and south of the city, and across the Buchan coast where many datazones are within the 20% most deprived in Scotland.

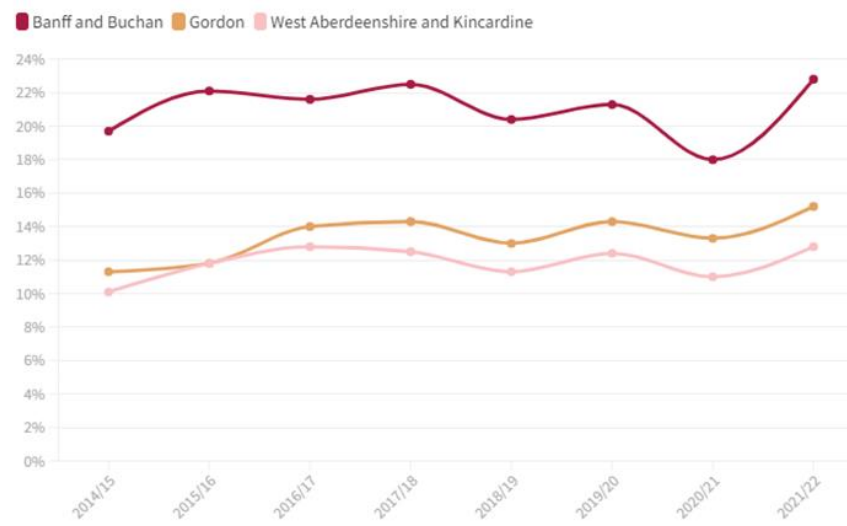
The most recent SIMD data shows that Woodside in Aberdeen is in the most deprived 5% of datazones in Scotland, with Seaton, Northfield, and Torry in the City, alongside Peterhead Harbour and Fraserburgh Harbour/Broadsea in the most deprived 10%. Several other localities in both Council areas sit within the 20% most deprived quintile.

The Aberdeen Population Needs Assessment published in 2023 states an estimated 7,994 children (0-15 years) in Aberdeen City were living in poverty (below 60% median income after housing costs). This is equivalent to 20.5% of children in the City. The overall figure in Aberdeenshire is 16%, however there are disparities across the Council area ranging from 12.8% in West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine to 22.8% in Banff & Buchan. Scottish Government data shows that more than two-thirds of children in poverty live in a household where someone is in paid work. (<https://data.gov.scot/poverty/index.html#Children>)

Child poverty rates have shown an uptick across the region in the post-Covid period, as the following charts (based on UK parliamentary constituencies) show:



Source: [End Child Poverty Coalition](#)



Source: [End Child Poverty Coalition](#)

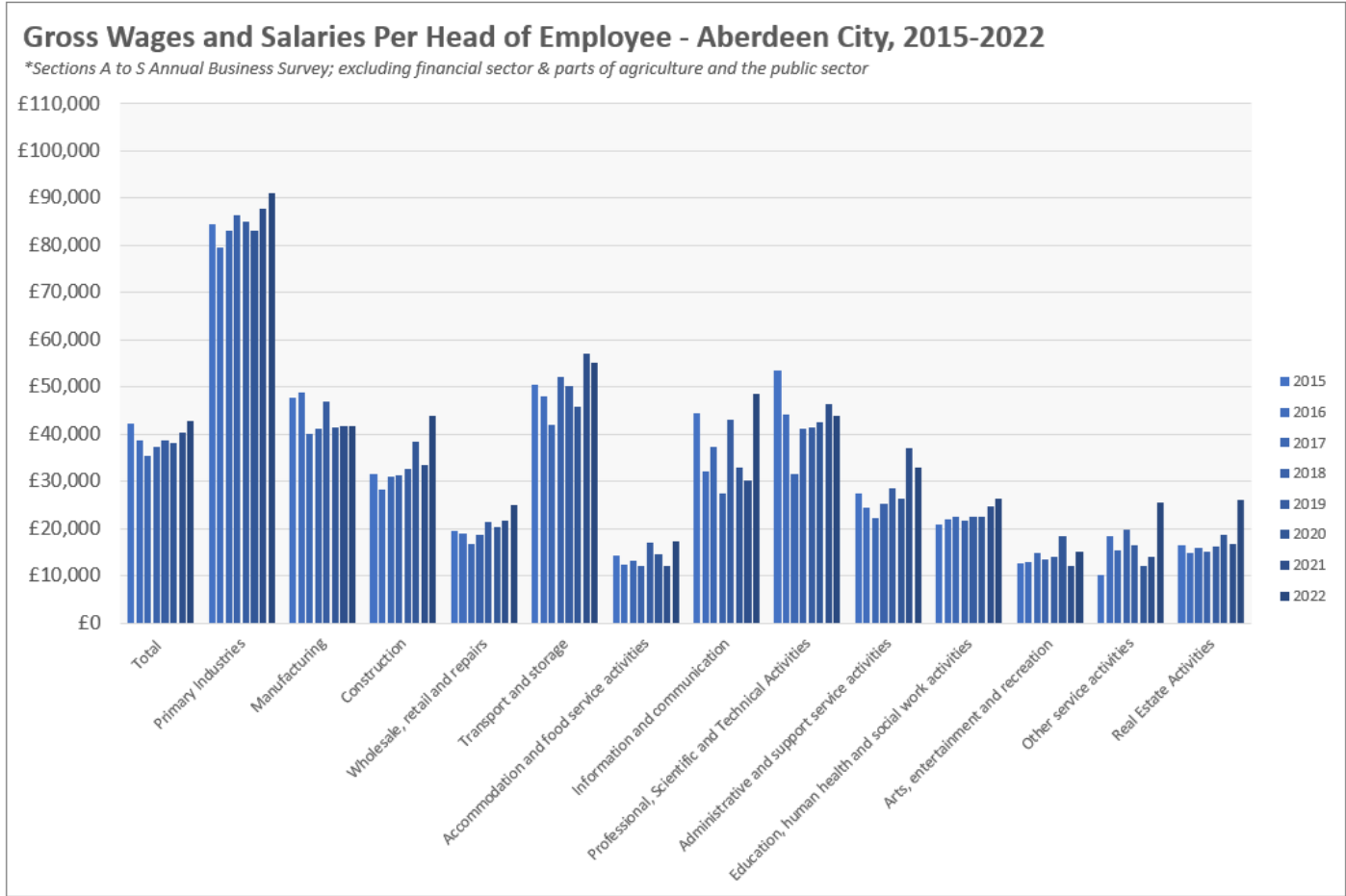
The key drivers of poverty are structural, linked to low wages, insecure work and unemployment - as well as the high cost of living and services. At present, wages are failing to keep pace with the real cost of living, and insecurity in the labour market are undermining the impact of paid work on poverty rates. This means that employment is not always the route out of poverty it should be, exemplified by the reality that over two-thirds of children living in poverty reside in a household where someone is in paid work.

Child poverty does not happen in isolation and is inextricably linked to the financial wellbeing of those that look after them. Ensuring the accessibility of good quality, secure and well-paid work - which is appropriate for a person's circumstances - is therefore central to effectively addressing one of the key drivers of poverty and ensuring children and families financial security.

The link between well-paid work and child poverty is clear - a child's financial wellbeing depends on the financial wellbeing of those that look after them and for many that will depend on access to work that pays the real Living Wage

The region, and particularly the City, has a very unequal pay structure – with stark differences between the highest and lowest earners. Annual income varies greatly by sector and neighbourhood/place.

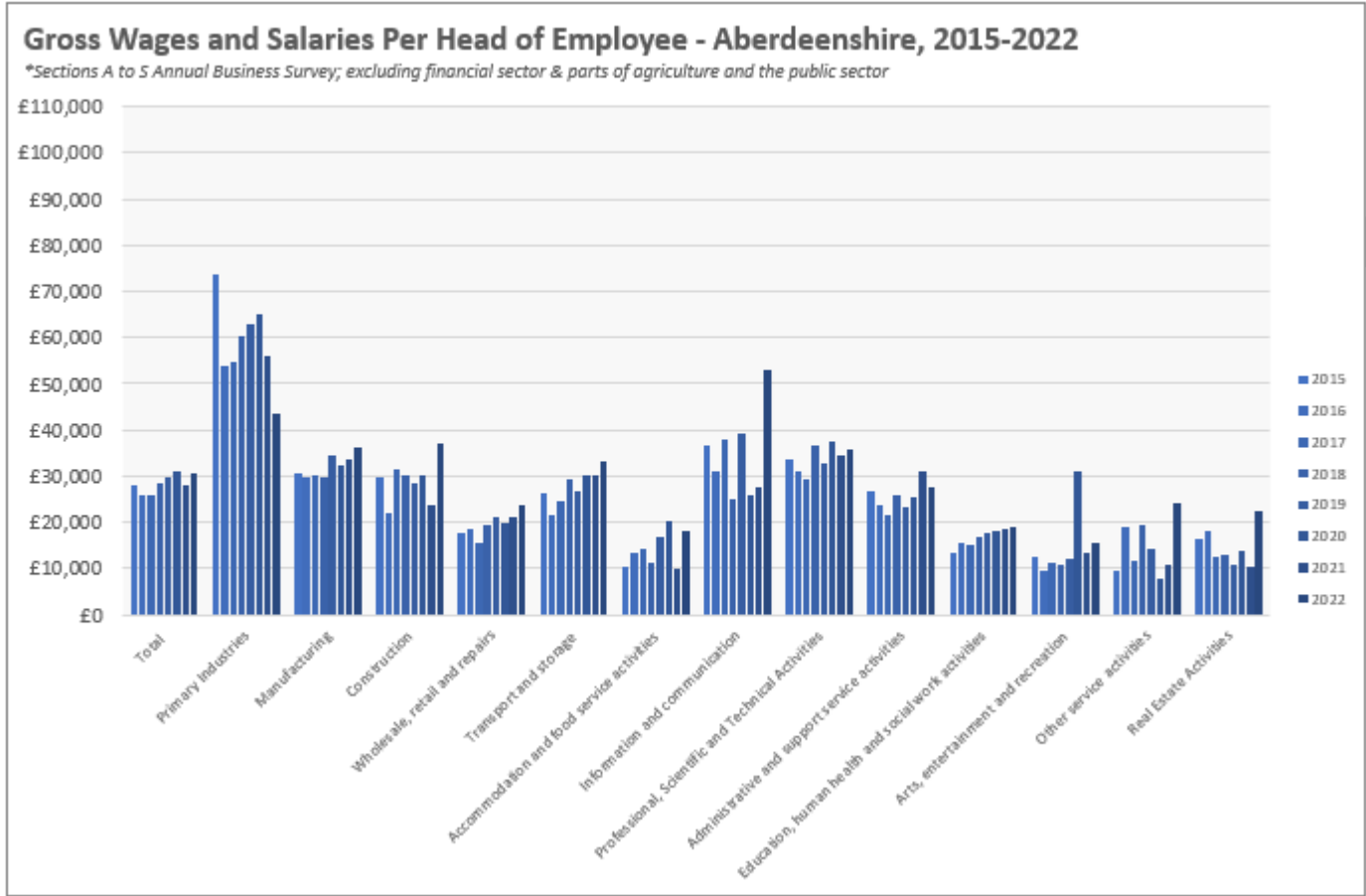
Table 1 below shows the variation between salaries per head by broad industry sector in Aberdeen City between 2015-2022 - with the highest wages in the primary industries (Over £90,000 per head) and the lowest (under £20,000) in Accommodation & Food Services.



(source –Scottish Annual Business Statistics)

Whilst the variances are not as marked in Aberdeenshire, it is the case that many households in Aberdeenshire have incomes significantly higher than the Scottish and UK average, with the highest incomes in settlements closest to the City whilst those in the north and northwest of Aberdeenshire, incomes are generally below the Scottish and UK average (Source: Aberdeenshire Council – Household income in Aberdeenshire - Jan 2025)

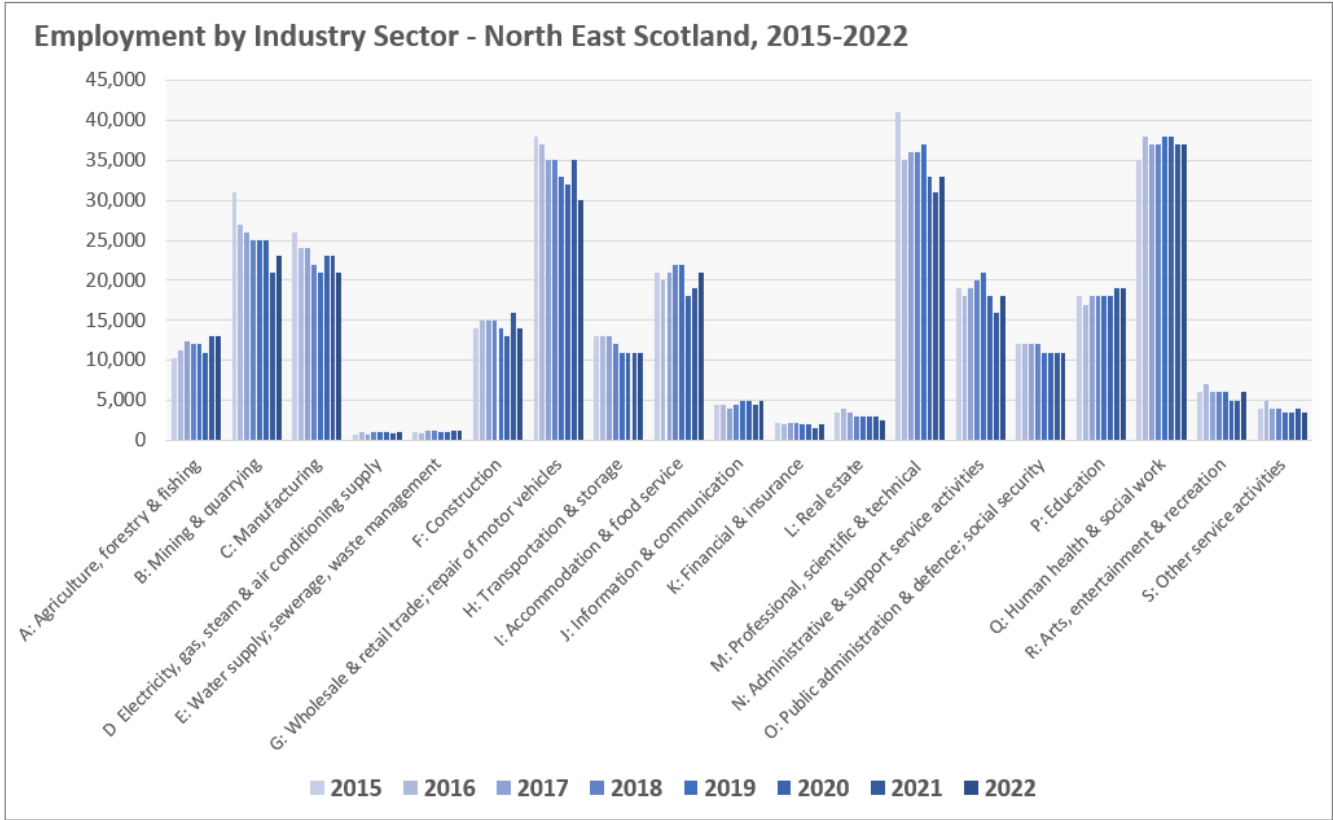
Table 2 below shows the variances in Aberdeenshire between 2015 and 2022.



(source –Scottish Annual Business Statistics)

Several sectors within the region are historically low paid - well below a real Living Wage – but employ significant numbers within the region as highlighted in Table 3. Engagement with these sectors will be a priority for the Action Group.

Table 3



(Source – ONS: Business Register and Employment Survey)

Income deprivation is problematic across parts of the region. Data from SIMD shows datazones in Seaton, Woodside, Torry, Peterhead and Fraserburgh where over a third of the working age population in those communities are income deprived. The employment deprived figures in all these datazones are less than the income deprived. The most recent data from the Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings (ASHE) shows that that 91.9% of people of Aberdeen currently earn above the real Living Wage, whereas the figure is 87.6% in Aberdeenshire.

Whilst at April 2025 inflation had fallen from the high levels of 2022/23, and wage growth has risen above it, households are still being impacted by the cost of living. In June 2024, the Resolution Foundation reported that Household incomes had only risen by 7% since 2010 – a total rise over the 14-year period of just 7% - or an average of half a percent a year - in the amount people had left over to spend after paying tax. By contrast, disposable incomes rose 38% over the 14 years up to 2010, the Foundation reported, with slow economic growth and three major economic shocks impacting households' disposable incomes. With the current landscape it will still be vital to engage with those delivering wider anti-poverty strategies and work in the region.

Whilst the cost of living continues to impact, we also have to be aware of the issues facing employers – operating costs are continuing to impact, exacerbated by external factors – geopolitics and fiscal changes – at a time when growth is slow. Cost pressures on all employers – particularly the third sector – are increasing, and we must be cognisant of the concerns and issues facing them.

Listening to employers will be a key strand of the plan – ensuring sustainability alongside promoting the business advantages that accredited employers can achieve.

With the north east of Scotland economy in transition, this provides the opportunity to ensure that future prosperity is shared more broadly through fair work and the creation of well-paid jobs that benefit people in all sectors across all parts of the city – ensuring work is a route out of poverty. The Regional Economic Strategy seeks to address poverty in the region within its theme of community and cultural identity - and has set an objective of becoming a Living Wage region with 95% of overall employment offering a real living wage or higher.

Close regional partnership working is embedded within the north east, highlighted by the Regional Economic Strategy, and there is a wide travel to work area across the region – with travel flows both ways in and out of the City and Aberdeenshire.

The region is at the forefront of the energy transition and the journey to net zero, utilising the skills that have been developed over the past 50 years – not only to diversify the energy sector, but also our other sectors. Ensuring a just transition will allow us to create wider opportunities for all from new, green jobs, but also those that support the wider economy and existing industries, plus those that protect the most vulnerable in society and deliver vital services. Sectors such as tourism, hospitality, health & social care will all play a key role in the future of our economy, but sustainability is vital.

The north east economy has always had to be resilient to external shocks and embrace new opportunities. The ability to change and evolve, demonstrated over many decades, is even more important today as the energy sector leads the transition to net zero and we diversify our economy to grow established and emerging sectors, including digital, food and drink & agriculture, life sciences and tourism – with fair work principles embedded.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Whilst there is much we can do to proactively support the Living Wage movement, there will be external factors we need to take cognisance of due to their potential impacts on the delivery of this action plan such as the elections to the Scottish Parliament in May 2026, and those to Scottish Local Authorities in May 2027 which may lead to policy changes. Alongside the impacts of legislation such as the UK Employment Rights Bill, and effects of the uncertain geopolitical and economic landscape, the Action Group will actively monitor for any issues that materially affect our ability to deliver this plan and take appropriate action.

ACTION GROUP AND PLAN

The Action Plan will need to be flexible to ensure its resilience, however initial actions and outcomes have been agreed. The broad action plan outcomes for each year are as follows, with the detailed plan set out below:

- Year 1 – Continue to increase awareness of the real Living Wage and the ambitions for the region amongst employers and the public, engage with employers to understand business pressures whilst highlighting benefits of paying the real Living Wage
- Year 2 – Continue to promote payment of the applicable rate of real Living Wage, increase the number of accredited employers in the region and monitor wage uplifts as a result of employer accreditation or measures applicable to directly employed staff.
- Year 3 – Continue as years 1 & 2, and develop a further 3-year action plan

The broad targets over these years will be to:

- Seek to accredit a further 150 headquartered employers in the region
- Ensure at least an additional 1250 employees across the region benefit from an immediate pay uplift as a result of accreditation or employer measures applicable to directly employed staff
- Prioritise engagement with sectors identified by the Action Group as experiencing low pay challenges

The Action Plan will be treated as a live document to take account of any changing economic or social issues, etc, that could affect delivery of our ambitions. It will be taken forward by the Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire real Living Wage Action Group and wider partners in the Living Wage movement. At the time of drafting, the group comprised the members below but will seek to include additional representation from employers of varying size from key target sectors, with Charing responsibilities to be decided amongst the members.

ABERDEEN & ABERDEENSHIRE REAL LIVING WAGE ACTION GROUP – as at April 2025		
Name	Organisation	Accreditation Status
Stuart Calderwood	Aberdeen City Council/Aberdeenshire Council Joint Procurement Service	Accredited
Councillor Christian Allard	Aberdeen City Council	Accredited
Claire Shaw	Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations	Accredited
Rachel Morrison-McCormick	Living Wage Scotland	Accredited
Alasdair Ross	Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action	Accredited/Living Hours
Julie Phillips	NHS Grampian	Accredited
Martin Barry (co-chair)	Scottish Enterprise	Accredited
Shelley Mackenzie	Station House Media Unit (SHMU)	Accredited
Andrew Alleway	Tidy Green Clean	Recognised Service Provider
Angie Hood	Aberdeenshire Council	Accredited
Jackie Farquhar	Cairngorms National Park Authority	Accredited

Andrea Buchan	Aberdeen Cyrenians	Accredited
Will Redpath	Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE)	Accredited/Living Hours

ABERDEEN & ABERDEENSHIRE REAL LIVING WAGE ACTION PLAN 2025-28					
Theme 1 – Leadership					
	Action	Lead Partner/Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1.1	Launch Making Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire a Living Wage Place	Living Wage Action Group	✓		
1.2	Identify business ambassadors/champions to provide leadership and influence for the real Living Wage movement across the business community	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
1.3	Agree actions for individual LW Action Group members to lead and deliver	Living Wage Action Group	✓		
1.4	Recruit private sector accredited employers onto Action Group	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
1.5	Develop approach to encourage further accreditation through supply chains and monitor uplifts resulting from employer measures applicable to directly employed staff	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
1.6	Report annually on progress to Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership & Community Planning Aberdeen	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
Theme 2 – Learn & Improve					
2.1	Engage with relevant sectors and business organisations to gain insight to opportunities and challenges of doing business	Living Wage Action Group	✓		
2.2	Work with the Responsible Business Network to promote the real Living Wage and encourage accreditation and employer measures applicable to directly employed staff within it	Living Wage Action Group/Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership/Community Planning Aberdeen	✓	✓	✓
2.3	Work with the Supplier Development Programme to promote the real Living Wage	Living Wage Action Group /Aberdeen City Council/Aberdeenshire Council	✓	✓	✓
2.4	Engage with other Living Wage Places to share and identify best practice	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
2.5	Gather relevant data to promote benefits of accreditation and employer measures applicable to directly employed staff	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
2.6	Develop approaches to ensure commitment to the real Living Wage within public procurement	Living Wage Action Group/	✓	✓	✓

		Aberdeen City Council/Aberdeenshire Council			
2.7	Establish a clear approach to improve and support accredited employer retention rates in the city	Living Wage Action Group	✓		
Theme 3 – Celebrate & Promote					
3.1	Develop a communications plan to raise awareness, understanding and the benefits of the real Living Wage and the Action Plan for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	Living Wage Action Group	✓		
3.2	Hold an annual Living Wage Week event	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
3.3	Develop and publish case studies of locally accredited employers and their employees	Living Wage Action Group/Living Wage Scotland	✓	✓	✓
3.4	Seek opportunities to promote the real Living Wage at events and strategic meetings	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
3.5	Publish articles in business organisation/trade association membership publications	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
3.6	Assist with local applications for national Living Wage awards	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
3.7	Establish a local networking group of accredited and interested employers to encourage dialogue, invite interested parties and improve retention	Living Wage Action Group	✓		
Theme 4 – Going Further					
4.1	Embed and encourage uptake of Living Hours accreditation and seek the potential for establishing Living Wage Buildings and Zones in the city.	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓
4.2	Identify and address the barriers that parent/caregivers face in accessing real Living Wage paid employment such as ensuring family friendly practices and understanding the needs of our most vulnerable families.	Living Wage Action Group	✓	✓	✓

MEASURING AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Total number of registered enterprises in Scotland ⁽¹⁾	173,370 (2022)
Total number of registered enterprises in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire ⁽¹⁾	21,500 (2022)
Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire businesses as proportion of all Scottish businesses ⁽¹⁾	12.4%
Total number of accredited real Living Wage employers in Scotland – as at February 2025 ⁽²⁾	3,815
Total number of accredited real Living Wage employers in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire ⁽²⁾	213
Accredited real Living Wage employers in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire as proportion of Scotland ⁽²⁾	5.5%

(Sources: 1: Scottish Government: Businesses in Scotland 2022; 2: Living Wage Scotland)

The targets below are based on accreditation and uplift rates in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire over recent years. These will be treated as minimum targets and will be reviewed at the end of each year and amended if success levels are high. Engagement with will be prioritised with both non-accredited anchor employers in the region, and within sectors identified by the Action Group as those with low pay challenges.

The retention rate for Living Wage accredited employers in Aberdeen City was 90% for 2024/25, and 91% for Aberdeenshire (90% combined for both areas). The national retention rate was 92%. The retention rates are updated at the end of each Financial Year. Given that publicity and awareness of the real Living Wage will increase in the region, and with the creation of a networking group to encourage dialogue and peer support, it is hoped that these measures will bring the retention rate up to and above the national level.

An annual report will be provided to the Boards of the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and Community Planning Aberdeen on the anniversary of the launch of this plan. Targets will also be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain appropriate, and that we continue to see net growth of the action plan.

Core Targets		Baseline	Year 1 Target	Year 2 Target	Year 3 Target	Cumulative Target
		April 2025	April 2026	April 2027	April 2028	
Accredited real Living Wage employers	Region	211	251	301	361	361
	Aberdeen City	116	20	25	30	191
	Aberdeenshire	95	20	25	30	170
People receiving an uplift	Region	2,753	300	400	500	3,953
	Aberdeen City	1,991	200	250	300	2,741
	Aberdeenshire	762	100	150	200	1,212
Employees covered by accredited real Living Wage employers	Region	63,782	1,750	2,500	3,250	71,282
	Aberdeen City	43,746	1,000	1,500	2,000	48,246
	Aberdeenshire	20,036	750	1,000	1,250	23,036

Proportion of employee jobs earning real Living Wage or above	Region	87.8%				95%
	Aberdeen City	90.0%				95%
	Aberdeenshire	85.0%				95%
Living Hours Employers	Region	4	4	4	8	20
	Aberdeen City	2	2	2	4	10
	Aberdeenshire	4	2	2	4	10

(Sources: 1 - Living Wage Scotland; 2 – Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings 2024)