



**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.

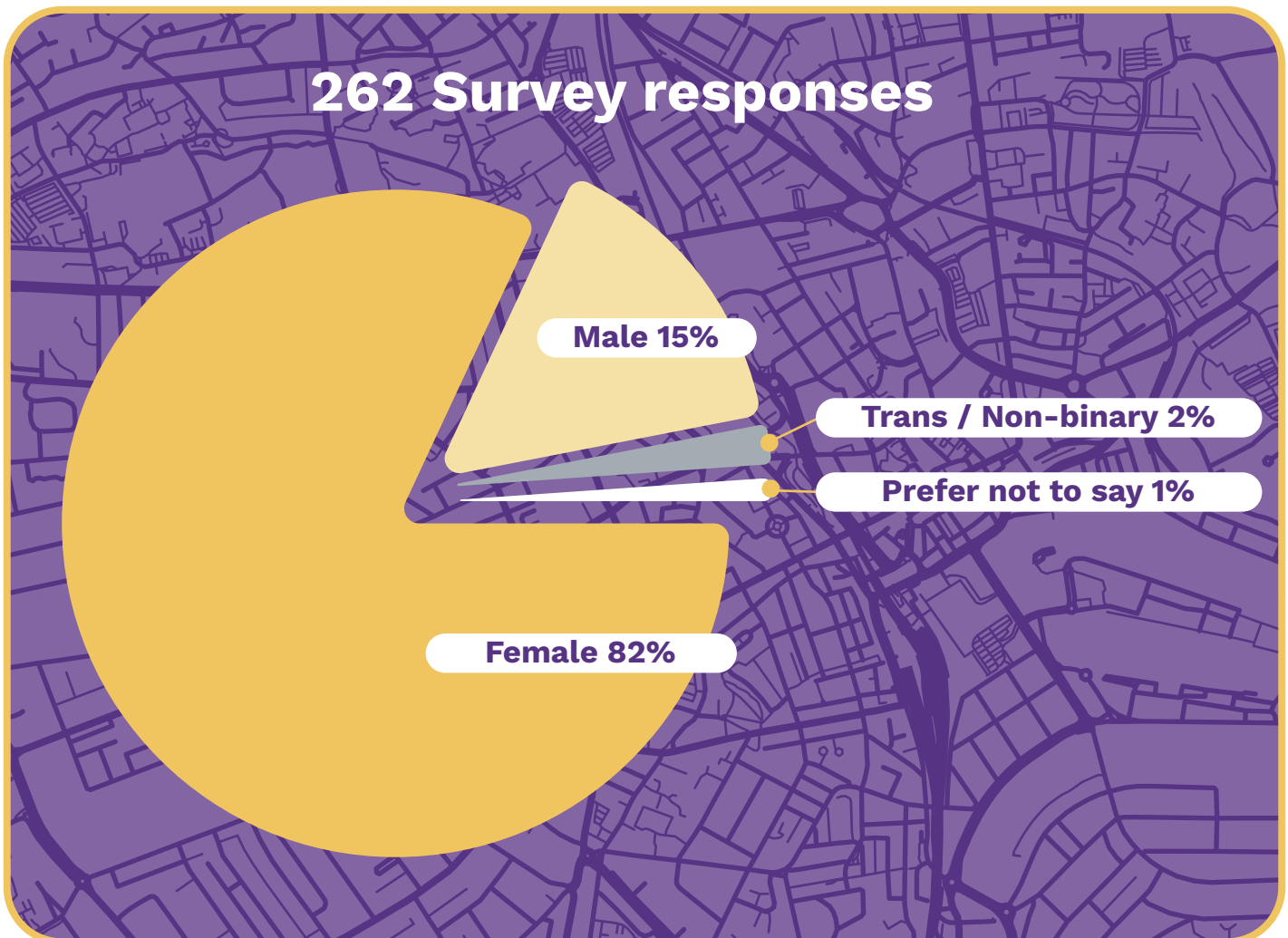
Online survey

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

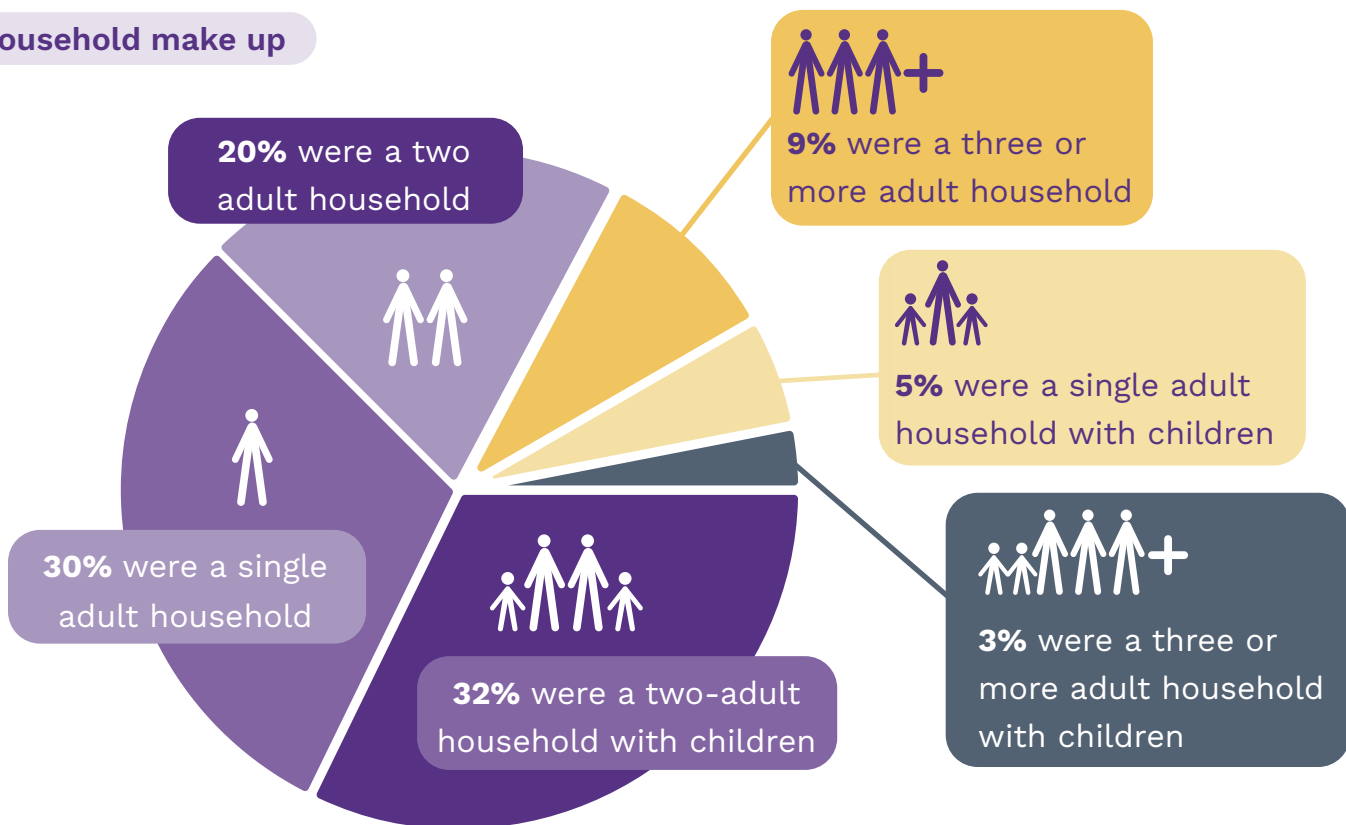
- The Cost-of-Living Crisis, Debt & Savings;
- Accessing Support;
- Childcare;
- Looking after other people;
- Housing and Safety.

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.

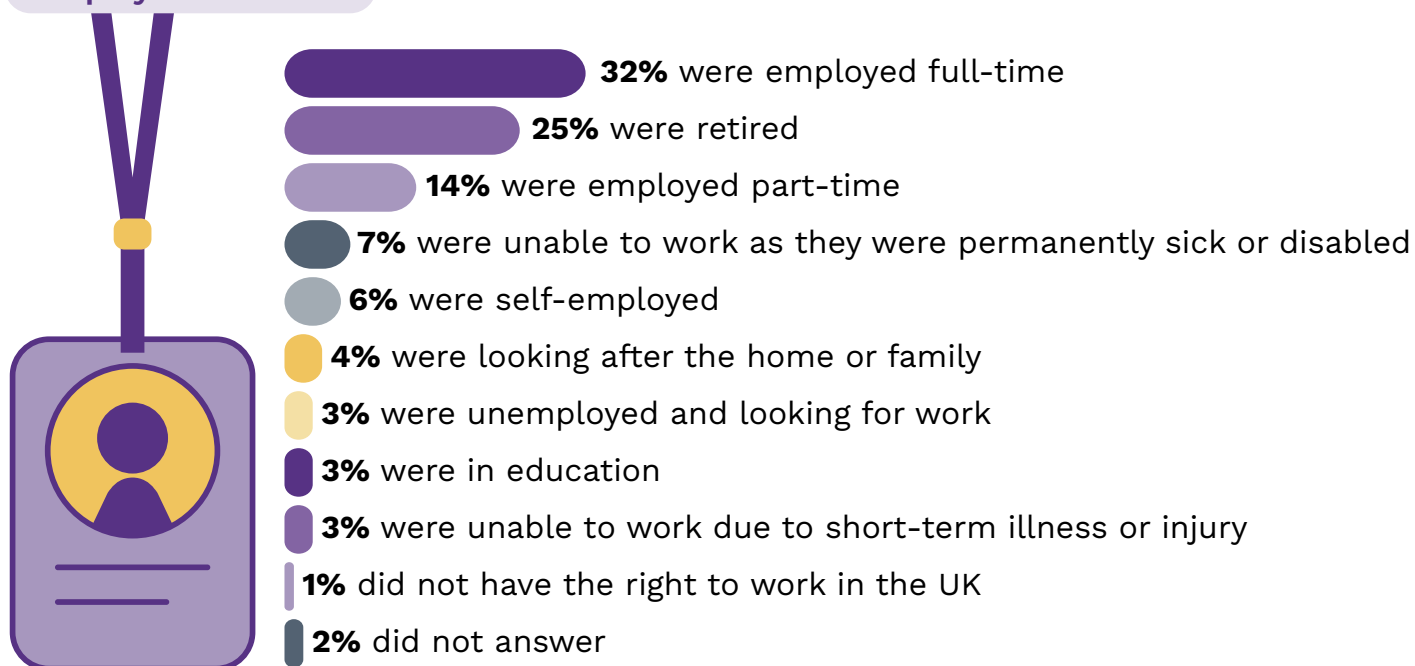
The survey received **262** responses from across Aberdeen. **82%** of survey respondents were female, **15%** were male, **2%** were trans or non-binary and **1%** preferred not to say.



Household make up



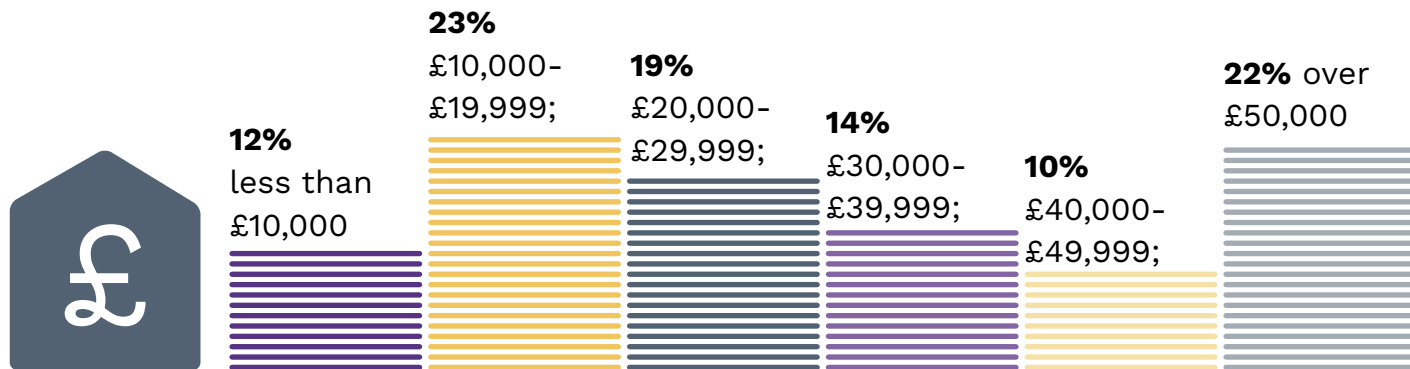
Employment Status



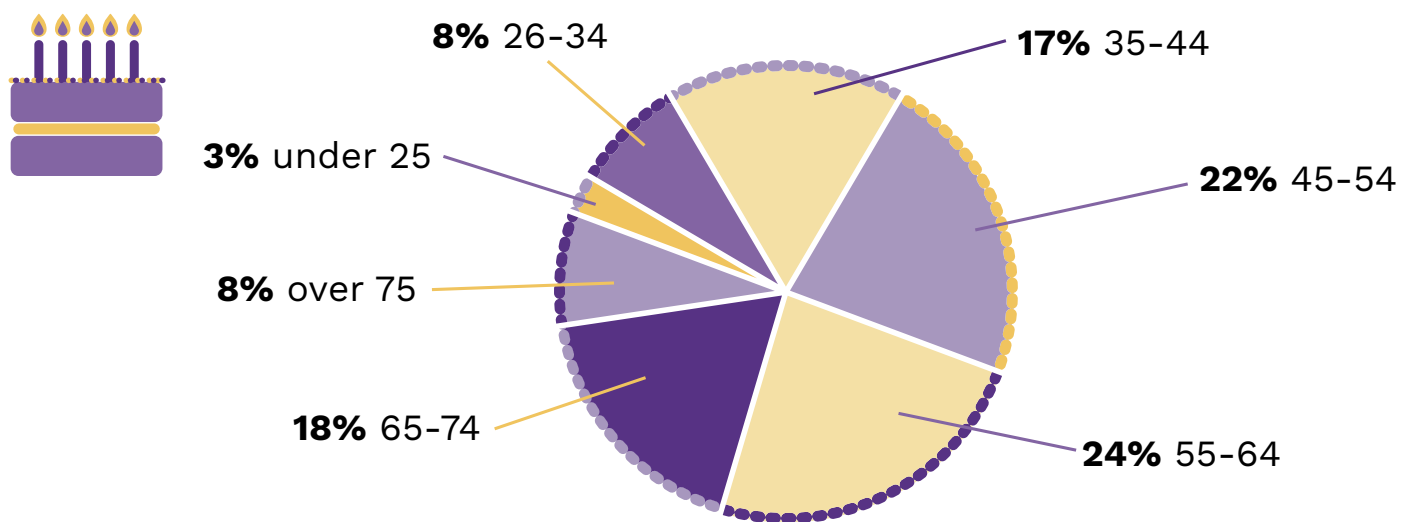
Sector of employment



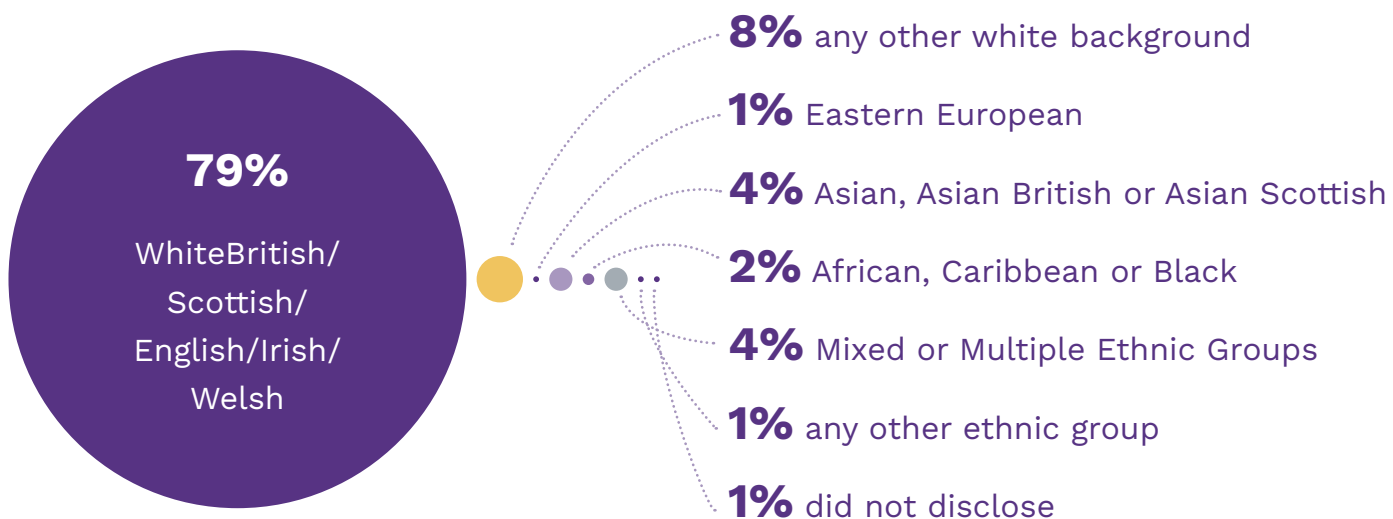
Household Income



Age



Ethnicity



Immigration status

85% UK National

1% Student Visa

9% Indefinite Leave to Remain

1% Spouse Visa

1% Asylum Seeker

2% Pre-settled status

1% other (including skilled worker visa)

Recourse to public funds

2%

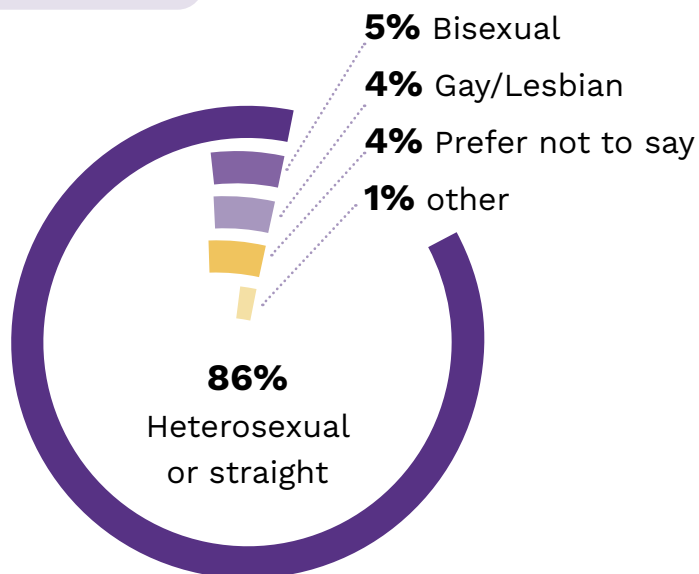
of respondents had No
Recourse to Public Funds

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:

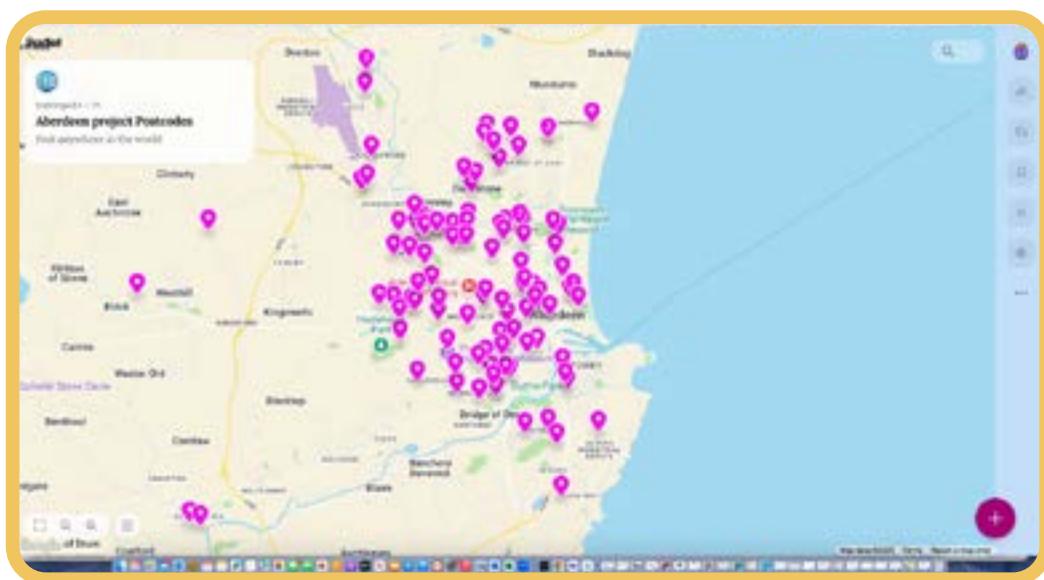
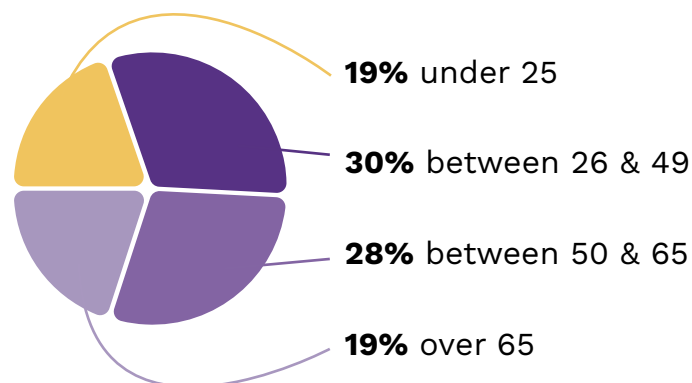
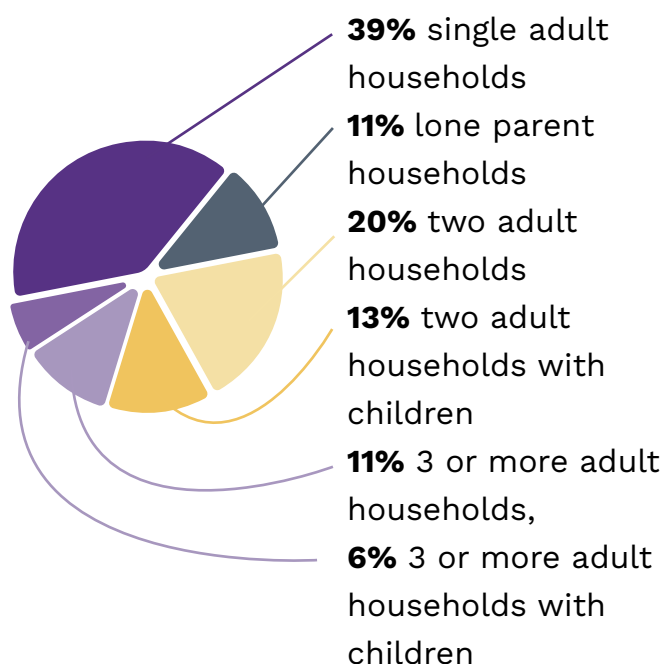
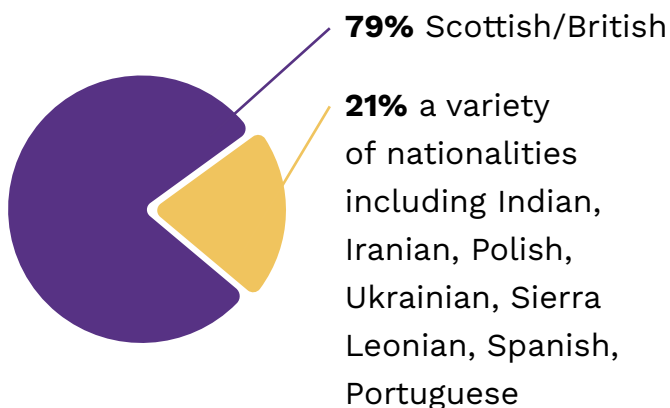
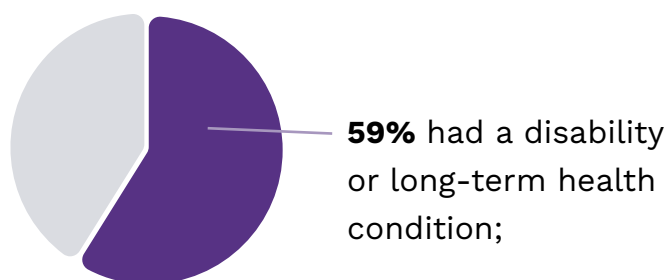
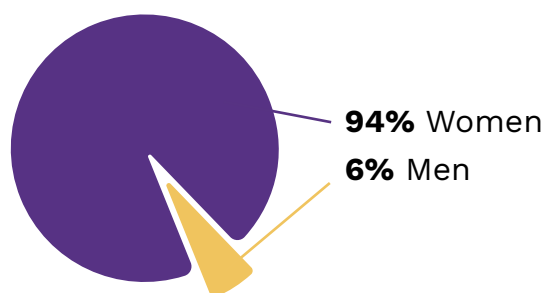
- Community food initiatives north east (Cfine) - women who have used their services (20 participants);
- Middlefield Community Project event (20 participants).

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.

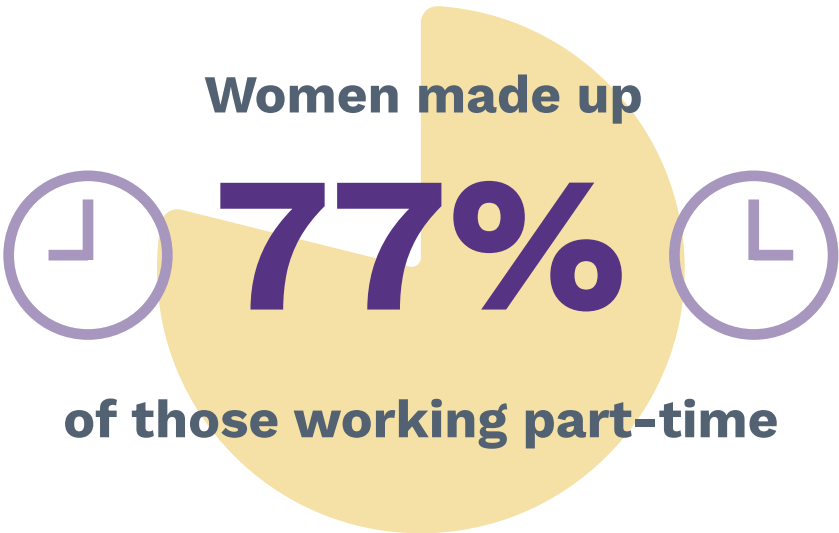
Data from the 2022 Census shows that there were **224,021** people living in Aberdeen, **51%** of whom were female.

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

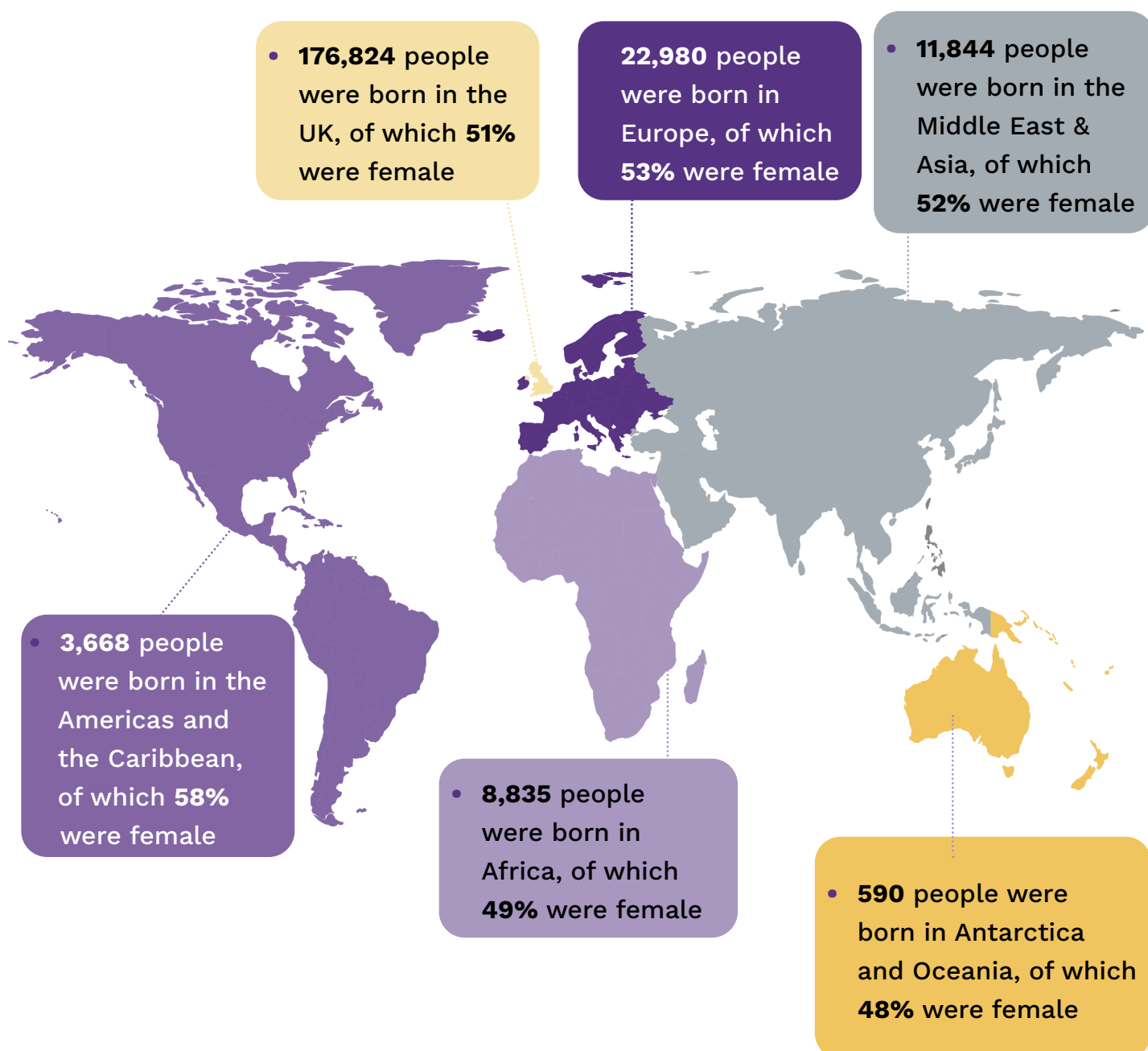


At the time of the census there were **47,523** single households



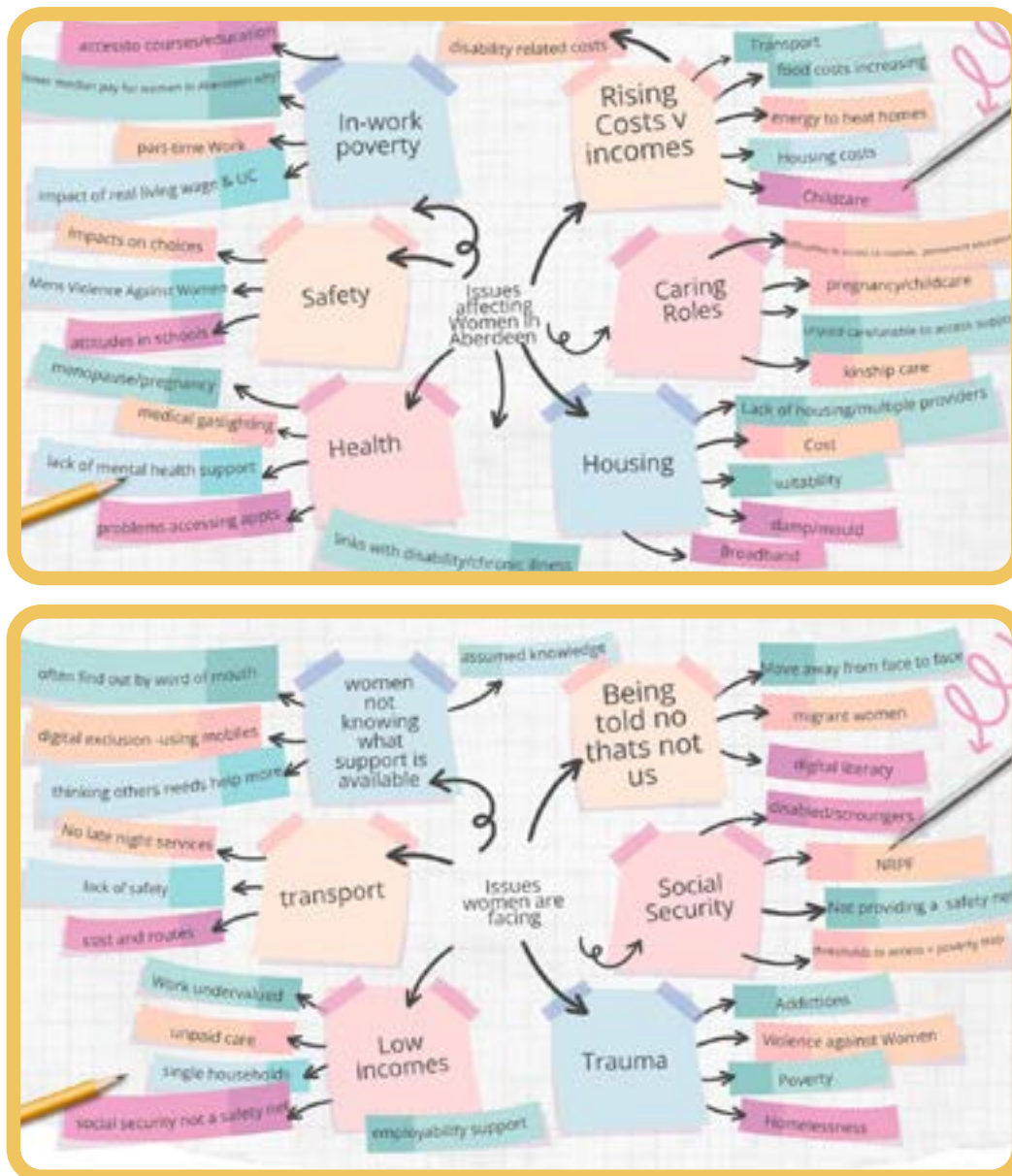
of which **51%** were women.

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 entire page is a stylized, monochromatic orange map. It features a complex network of lines representing streets, roads, and possibly water bodies or parks, creating a dense, urban-like pattern. The lines vary in thickness and orientation, giving it a hand-drawn or vector-art feel.

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:

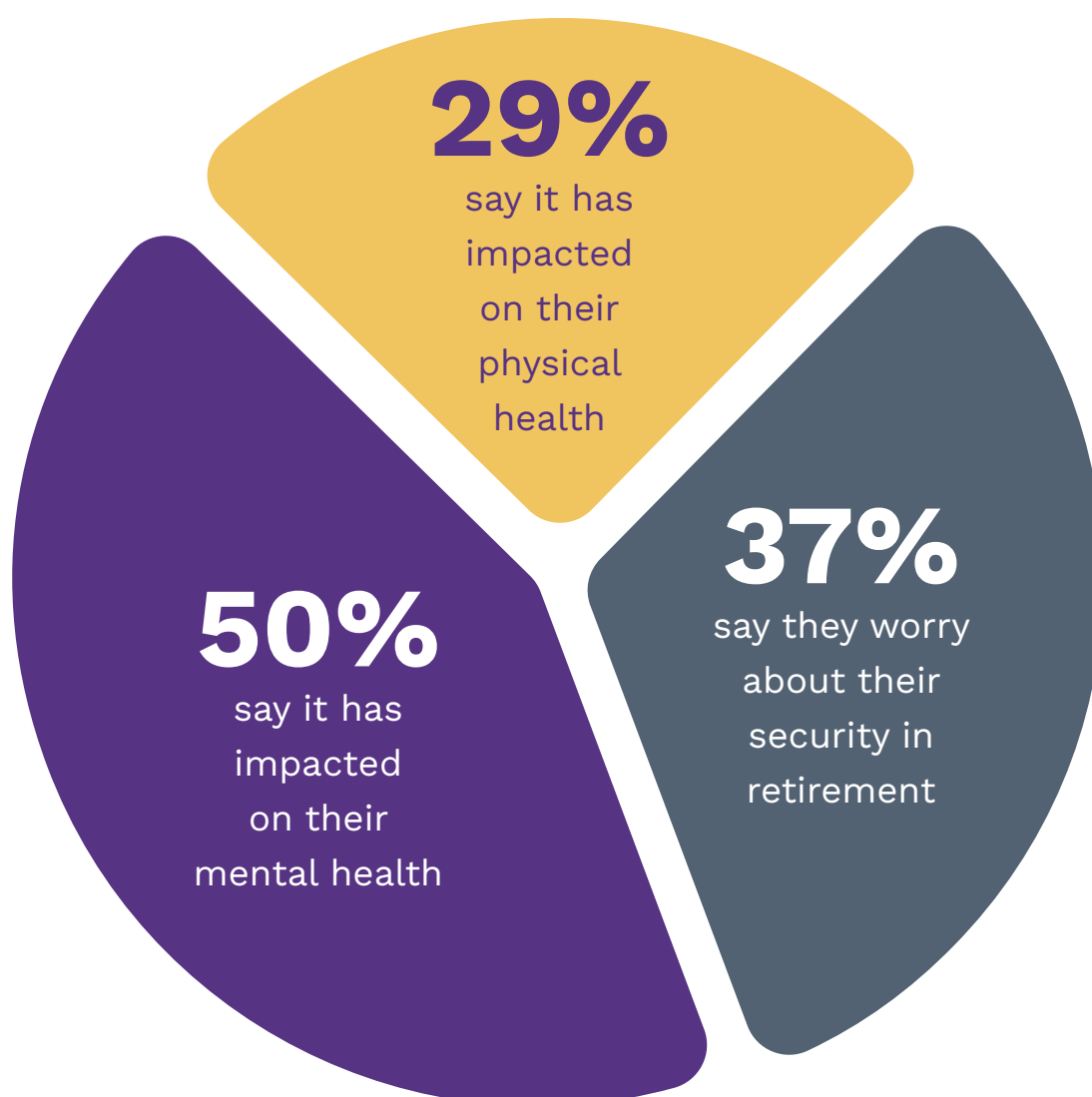
Strategy	All	Disabled people	Single parents	Single households	Single households
Cut back on food expenditure	61%	67%	85%	65%	82%
Not put the heating on	56%	68%	77%	65%	64%
Not going to the dentist	24%	37%	23%	33%	25%
Cutting back on journeys	35%	43%	54%	29%	32%
Cutting back on eating out	61%	69%	77%	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

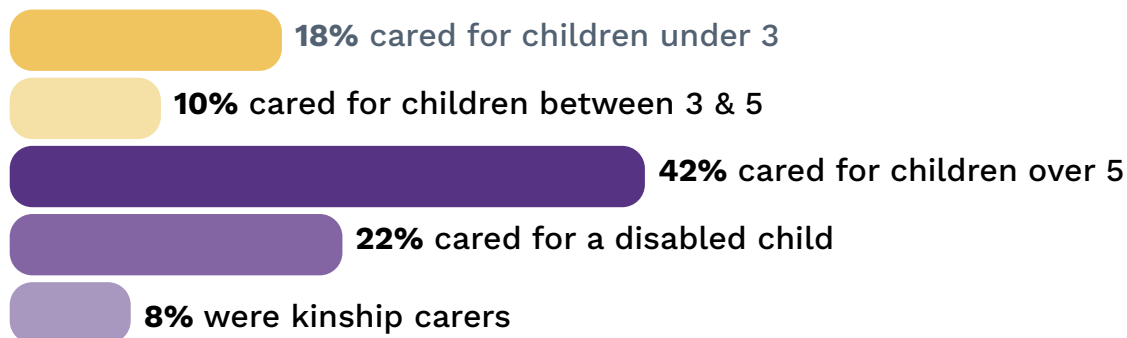
Care and Caring

Childcare

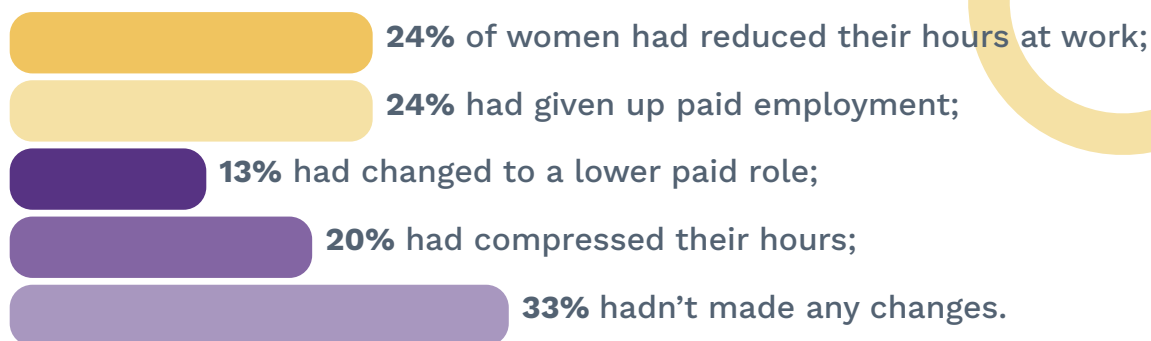
For women who responded to the survey, the average number of hours they spent undertaking care-related tasks was **4.5 hours** a day. For men it was **2.5 hours** a day.

27.5% of respondents had childcare responsibilities.

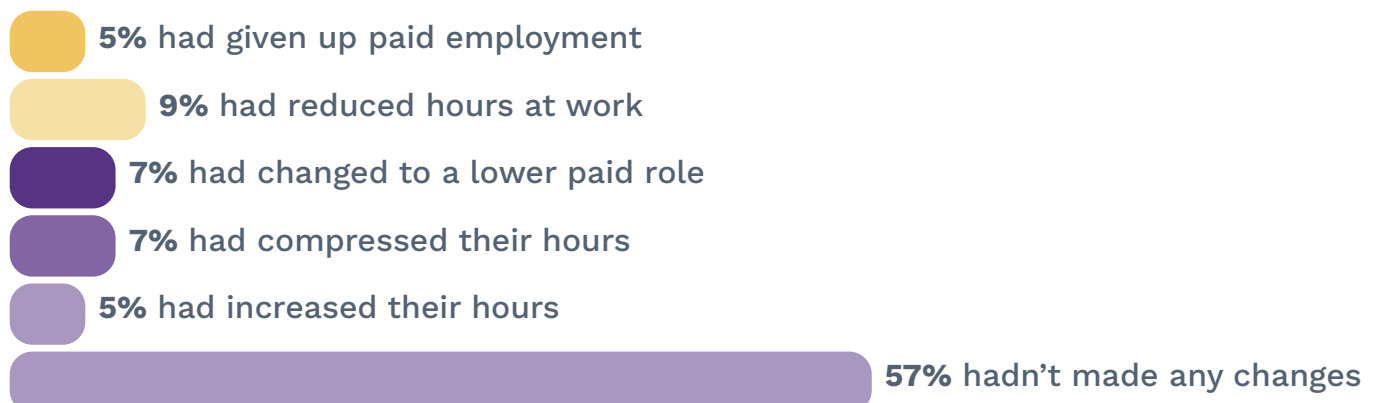
Of those who had childcare responsibilities:



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



*If you are the only one
caring for children...
access to job is more difficult
+ courses
+ most of the interactions
- if about grants for childcare
it isn't so easy to get
and more of them not only in Eng
(and not plain English)*

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

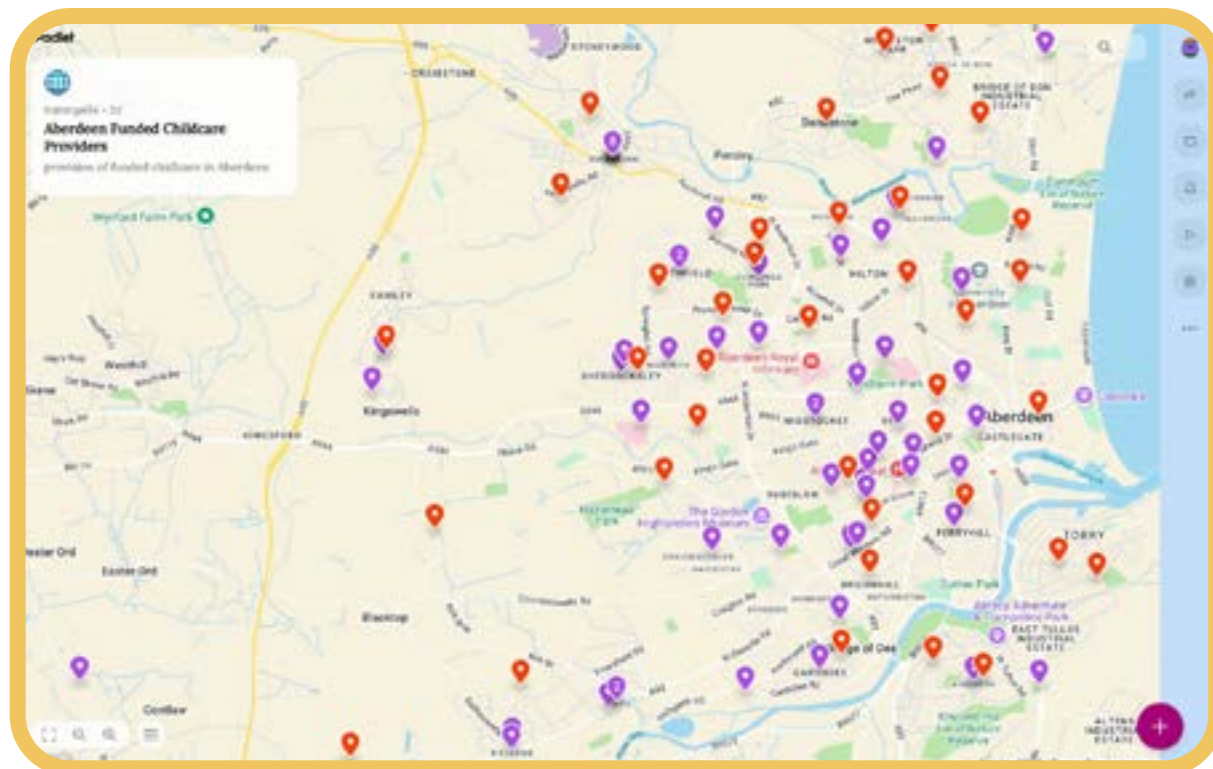
The Steering Group mapped the provision of ELC funded childcare (Map 1), breakfast clubs and school aged childcare (Map 2) and private nurseries and childminders (Map 3) from the information available on the Aberdeen City Council website⁸. The mapping exercise shows there are a number of areas of Aberdeen 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.

“

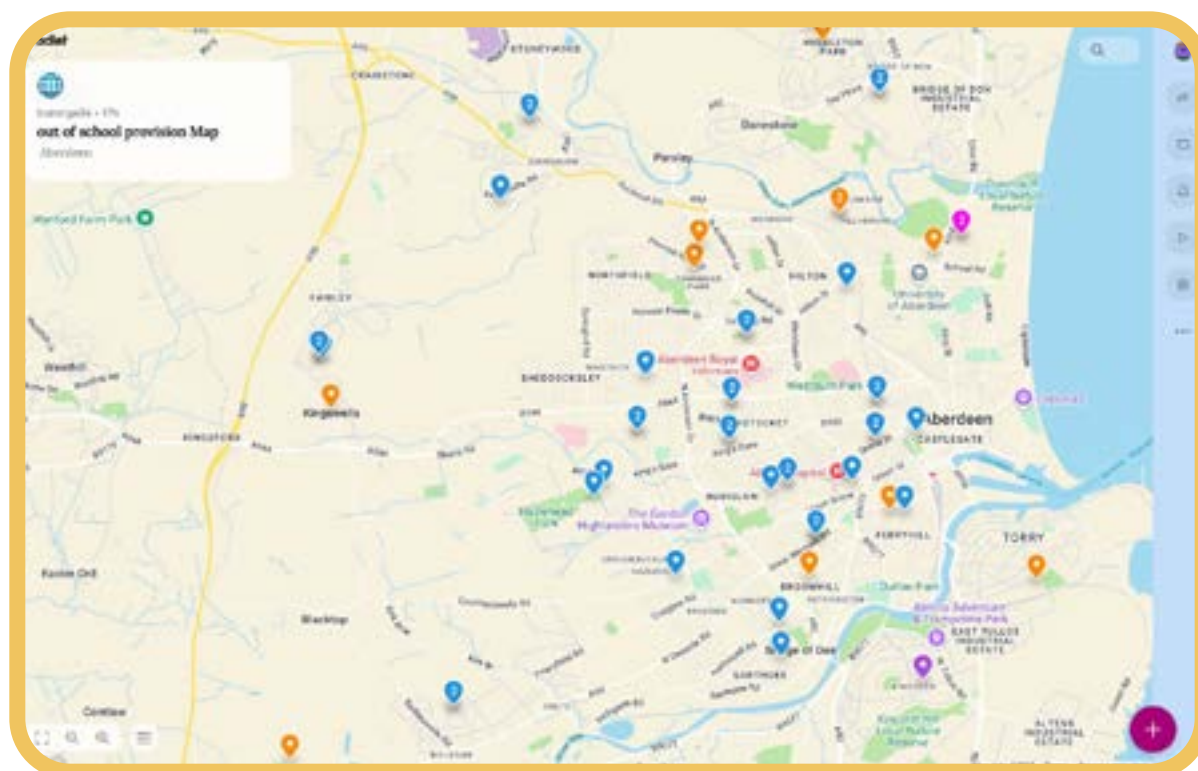
She (my sister) had to leave an hour and a half early for university so that she could drop the bairn off at childcare (as there's nothing in her area) and then head on another bus to the University before having to do the same trip again on the way back. So, buses from Northfield to Rosemount to Garth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

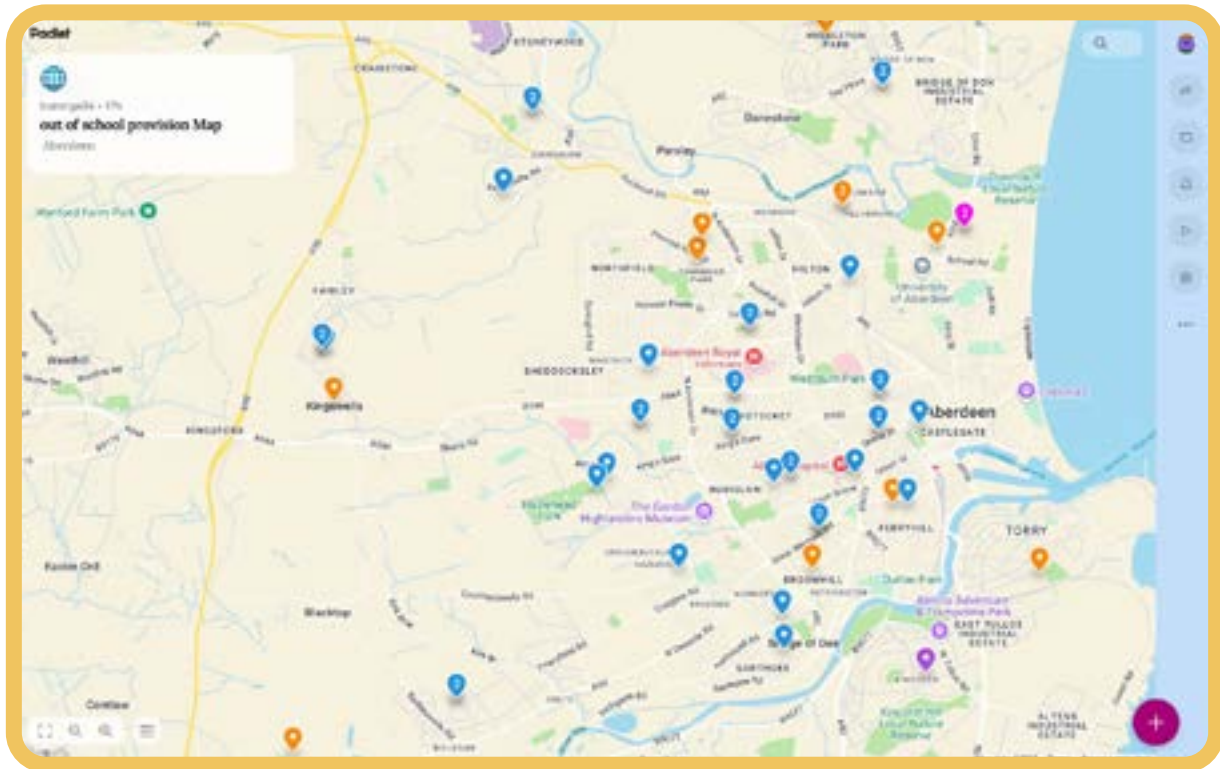


Map 2. School aged childcare provision in Aberdeen
(breakfast clubs and after school clubs)



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/carers 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

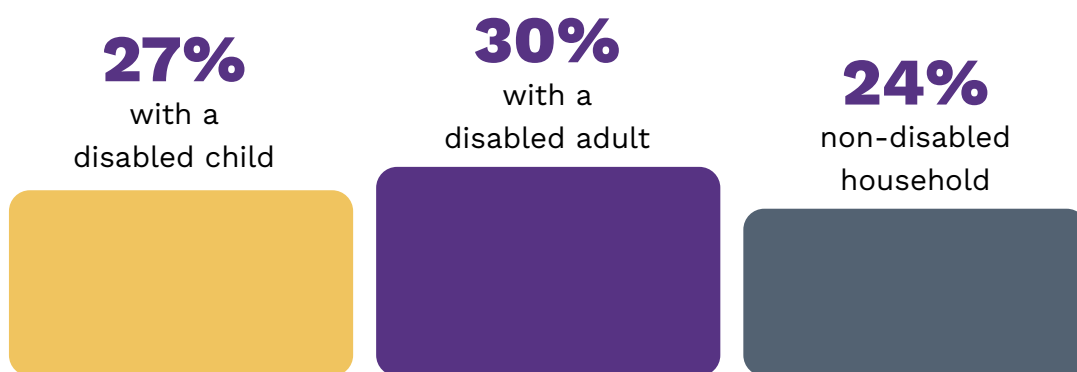
Recommendation:

- 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

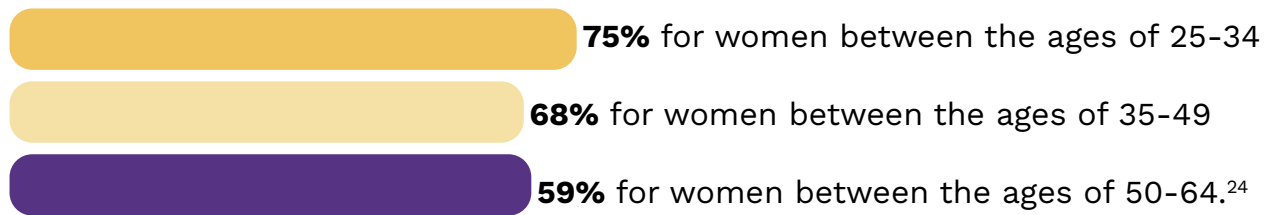
- Aberdeen City Council should review the eligibility criteria for all child related benefits it provides in light of rises in the Real Living Wage and DWP conditionality rules. Additionally, the Council should consider implementing a taper to support families just above the threshold (which is anyone 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

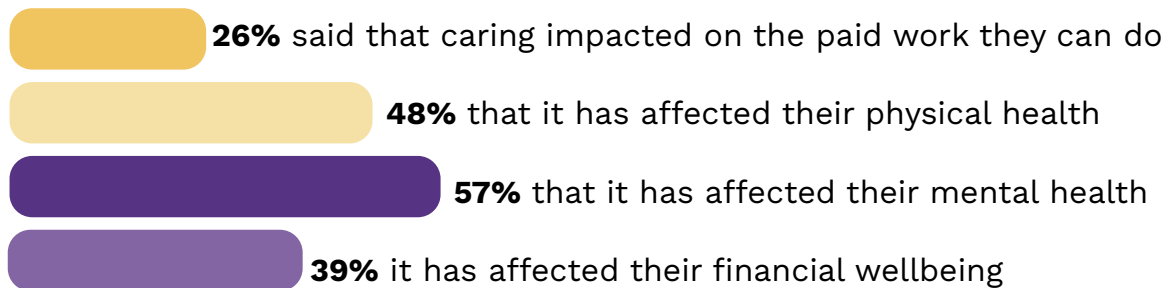
21% of survey respondents looked after someone other than a child under 18. 84% of these were women. 35% of respondents were also caring for children under 18, while 38% considered themselves to have a disability or long-term health condition themselves.

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

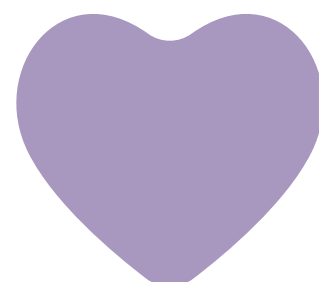
13% they it doesn't meet their needs at all

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

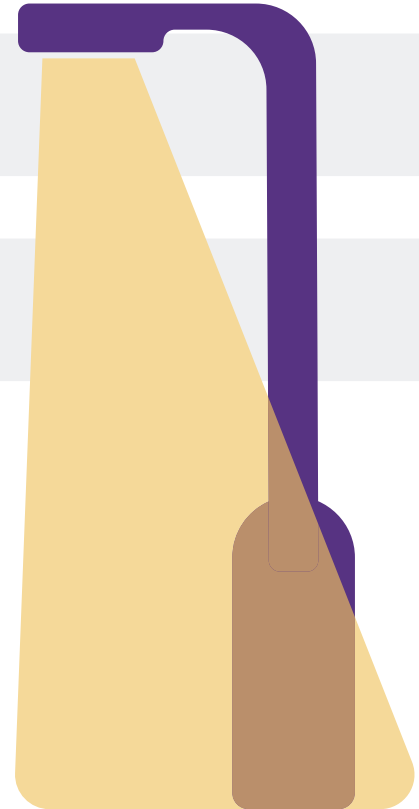
Poor street lighting was identified as one of the key issues affecting women and girls feelings of safety, impacting on whether they go out at night and/or how they travel. Not feeling safe getting to and from bus stops is a major barrier to women seeing public transport as a realistic option. Women 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:

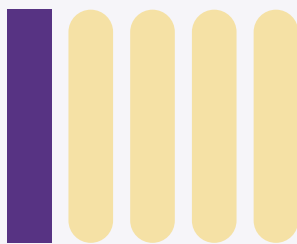
- Aberdeen City Council to review the placement of taxi-ranks.
- Aberdeen City Council to invest in community-based youth work as a preventative measure to fight anti-social behaviour, ensuring young people can participate in a wide range of activities.
- Police Scotland to work with Aberdeen City Council 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.

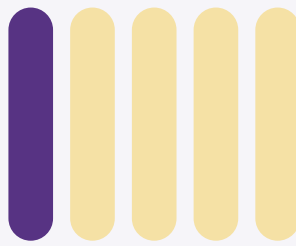
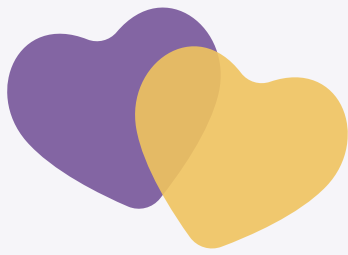
Recent research by the Kings Fund found that 'one in five (**21%**) men aged 16 to 29 who have heard of Andrew Tate⁶ say they have a favourable view of him – three times the share of women in this age group (**7%**) and men aged 30 to 59 (**7%**) who say the same. While among those who say they have 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.



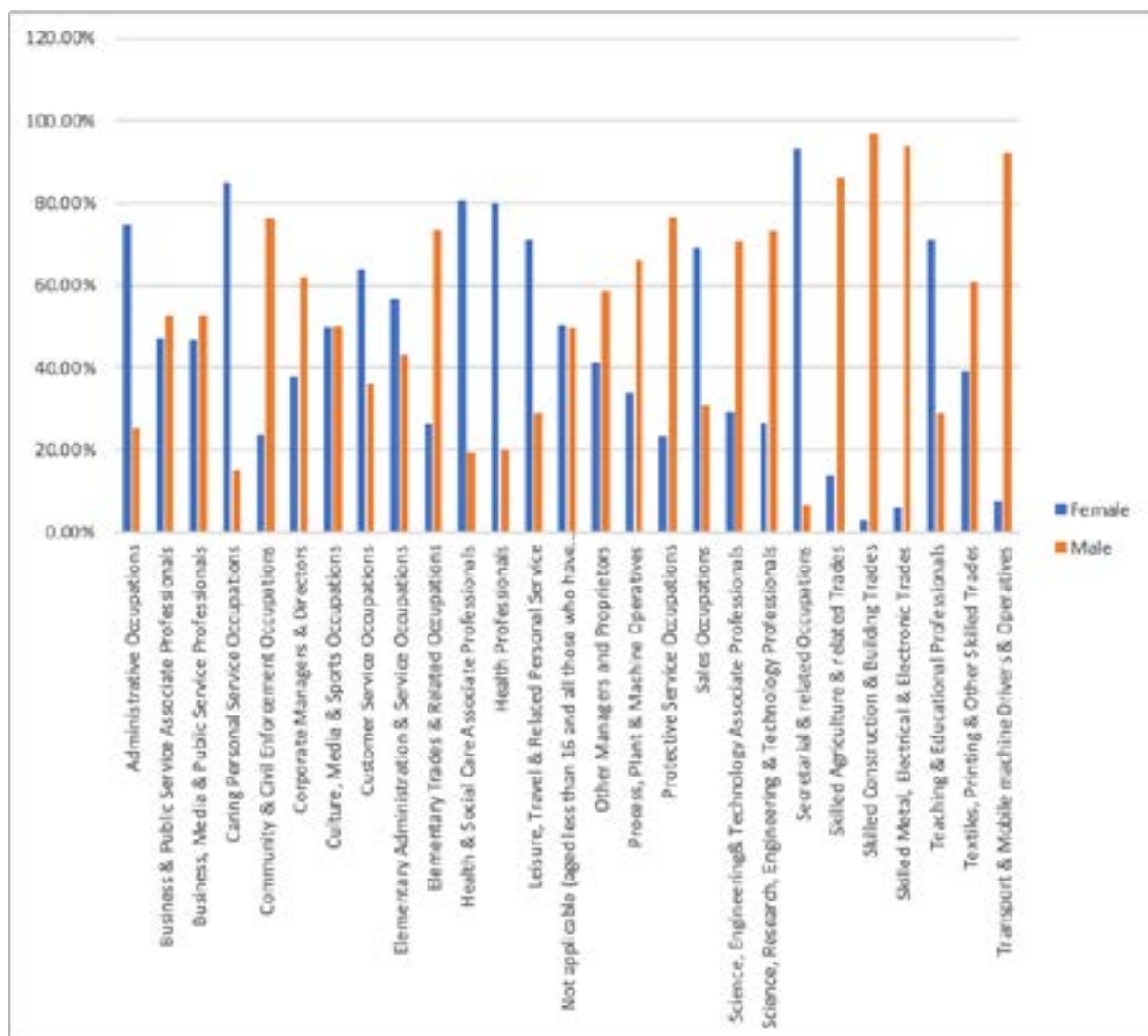
Welfare/ Benefits

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.*

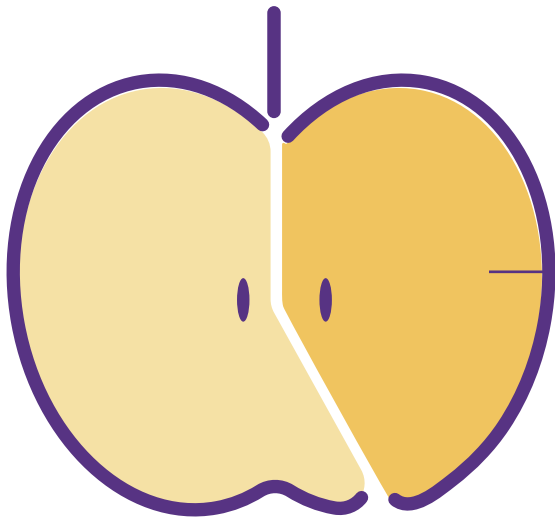
“ *I am now receiving the state pension along with a very small NHS pension. Now having to pay income tax as just above the threshold so have considerable less income than others receiving pension credit*

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.

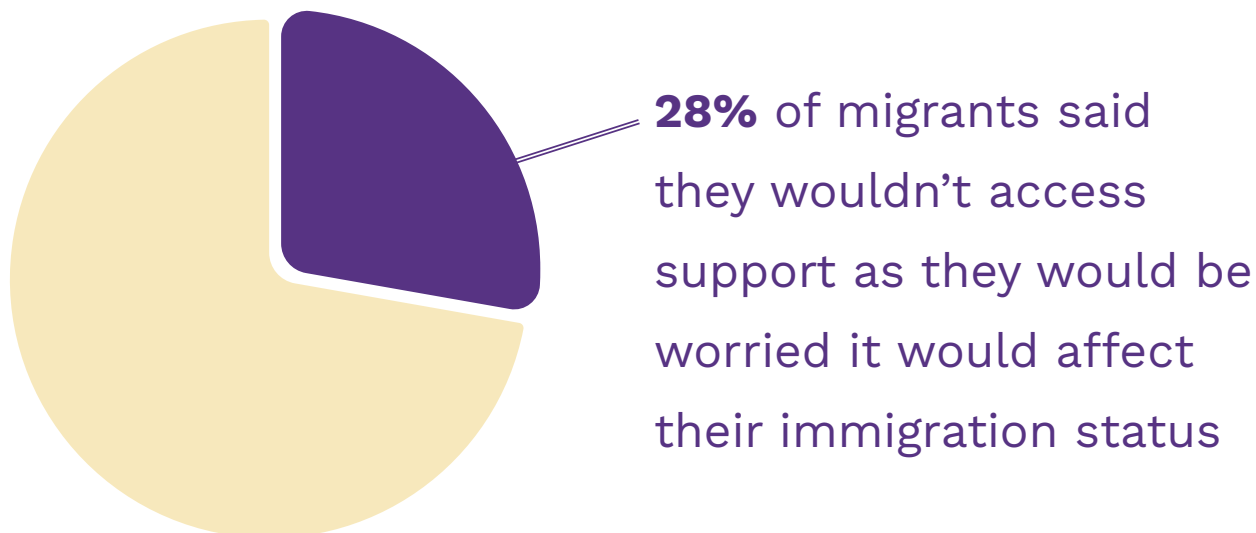
One of the main barriers people felt they would face was not qualifying for help. In relation to this, 58% of respondents thought they would be told no. This, combined with women in particular feeling that others deserve the support more than them, means that the lack of clarity over eligibility criteria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

66

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

66

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

66

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

66

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.

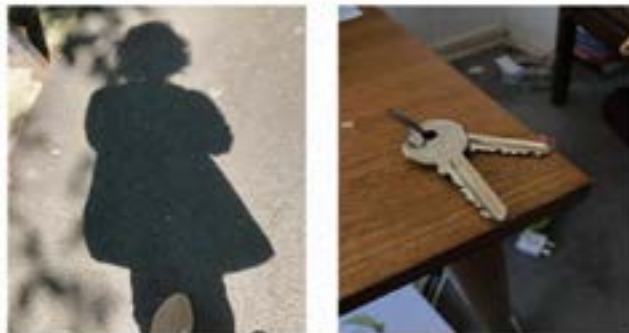


Photo 'getting a new home can be life changing but it can be a financial nightmare.'

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.

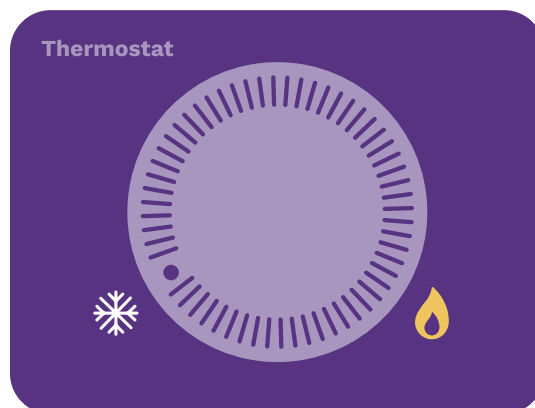


Energy Costs

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.

Gypsy/Traveller Women

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:

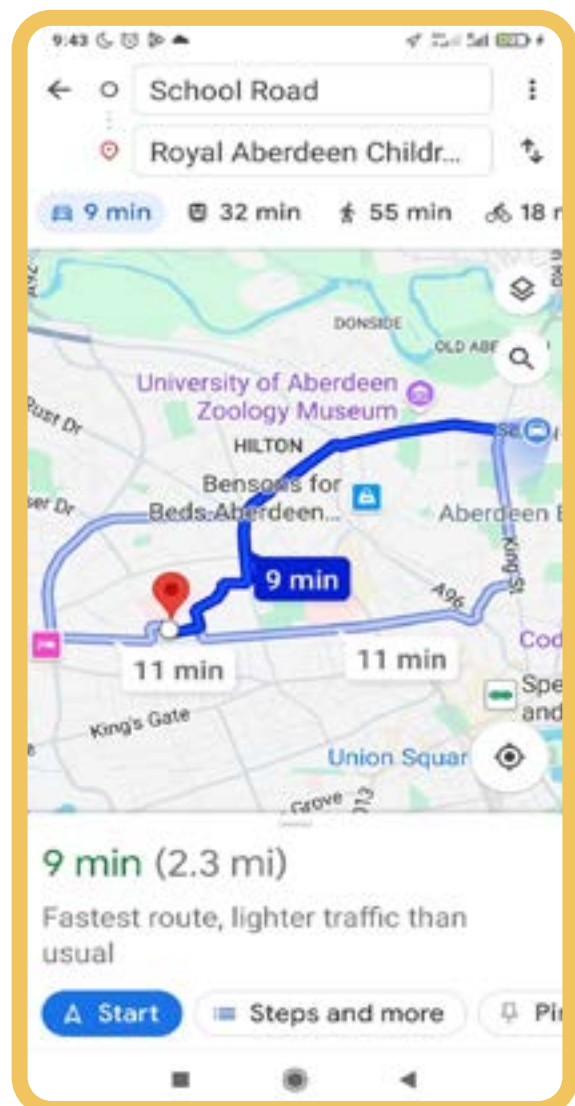
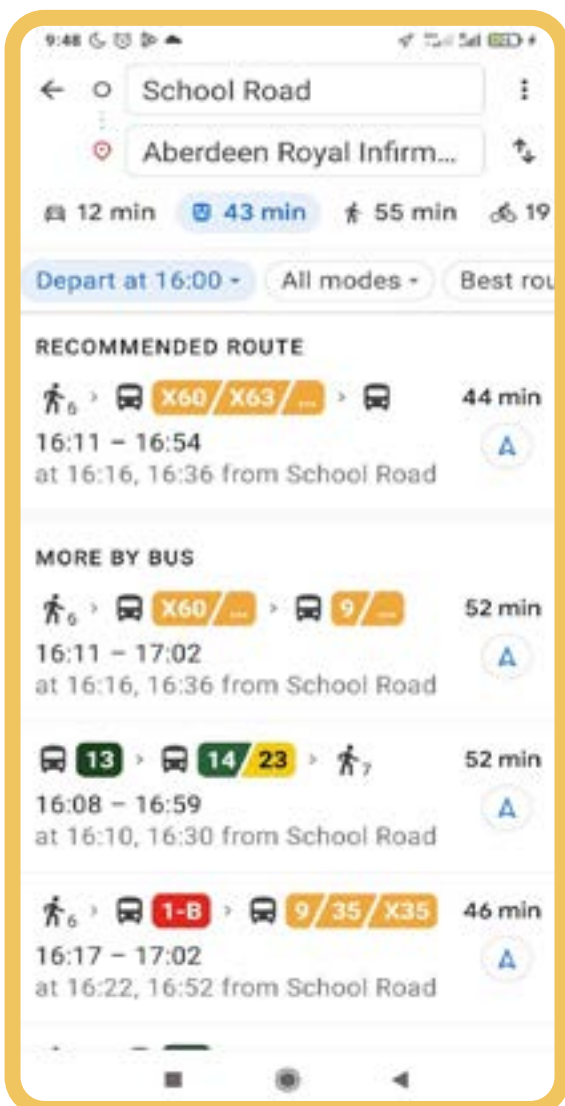
- Buses in Aberdeen are often unreliable, with instances of buses arriving late or not at all. Passengers have reported waiting for extended periods, leading to missed appointments and delays for children going to school;
- There is a lack of adequate night bus services, making it difficult for individuals 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

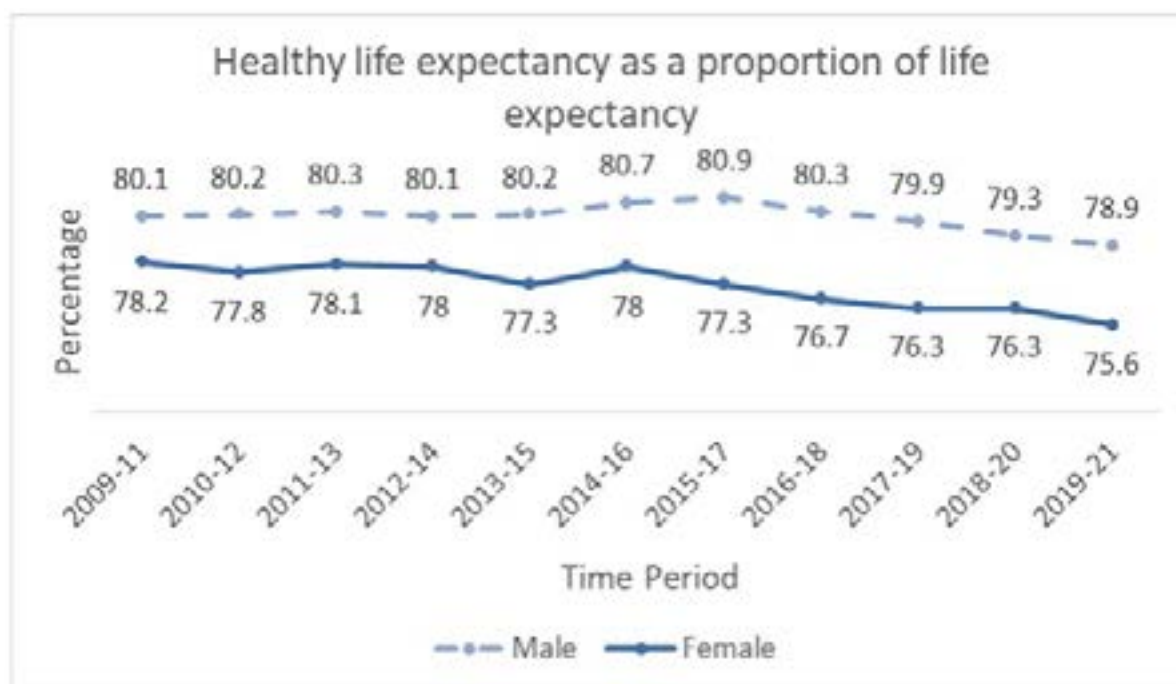
Poor Access to Health Care

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

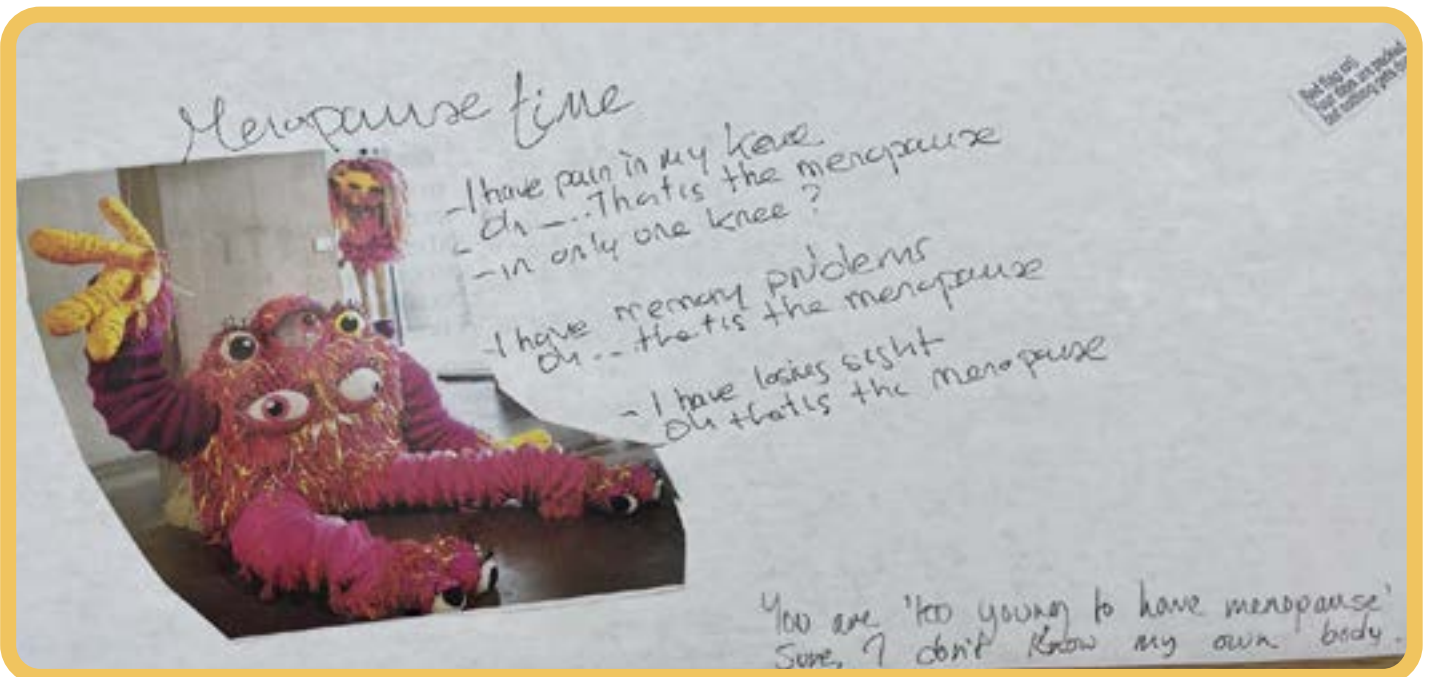
Some people from overseas are required to pay an Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). This is a fee paid by migrant residents in the UK for more than six months to access NHS services. The fee is currently **£776** for under 18s and **£1035** per year for over 18s.⁷³

“

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 a 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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