

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Committee: Housing and Environment

DATE 14 January 2014

DIRECTOR Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT Ethnic Minority Housing Outreach Worker Funding
2014/17

REPORT NUMBER: H&E/14/002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee Report of 26 October 2010. Elected members agreed at this Committee not to provide funding for the above post and that in-house training be provided to Housing Services frontline staff. In November 2013 the Council received an invitation to rejoin the project. Details of the project, the role of the Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker and the budget for the next three years are given in the appendices to this report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Committee agree an HRA contribution of £12,397 towards the funding of this project/ post for 2014/15, £12,812 for 2015/16 and £13,117 for 2016/17.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRA in contributing £38,326 towards the funding of this project/ post would allow the joint funding to continue until 2017. By joint funding of this post the housing and related services provided by this project would be extended to Aberdeen City for three years.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The post was created as a result of the recommendations of the "Improving the understanding of the housing circumstances of minority ethnic communities in Aberdeen City" report which highlighted the need to provide a direct housing advice and information and support service to the ethnic minority community in the North East of Scotland. This has been a successful project and shows that social housing providers are committed to ensuring equality of access to housing services if the

post continues. Failure to continue to fund this post could raise criticism of the Council in relation to indirect racial discrimination because we know there is a need for this service but are not providing it.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Research was undertaken by Heriot Watt University who produced the report “Improving the understanding of the housing circumstances of the Minority Ethnic Communities in Aberdeen City” and an action plan in 2004. Part of the action plan recommendations was to consider the provision of a dedicated Ethnic Minority Housing Outreach Worker, to provide housing support, information and advice to the ethnic minority communities in Aberdeen City and Shire. It was agreed by the Council at a meeting of the Community Services and Registered Social Landlord Forum in March 2007 that officers of the Council would work in partnership with Aberdeenshire and the RSLs to develop and implement this post. The project has been running since 2007.

The Ethnic Minority Housing Outreach Worker worked 25 hours per week and the post received funding of £30,000 per annum from the three partners. The breakdown of funding since 2007 has been as follows per annum:

Aberdeen City, £10,000
Aberdeenshire, £10,000
RSLs, £10,000 (through the Lintel Trust, an RSL charity)
Total, £30,000

The City Council’s funding ran to March 2011. The Council decided at a meeting of the Housing and Environment Committee on the 26th October 2010 to discontinue funding for this project from financial year 2011/12 onwards.

The project has continued successfully to operate in Aberdeenshire, with funding from that Council and RSLs, on reduced hours. The work of the Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker has continue to be effective in addressing the housing needs of the ethnic minority community and migrant workers (see appendix 1).

An approach has been made requesting Aberdeen City to rejoin the project (see appendix 2 for budget details). Aberdeenshire Council considered future funding for this project at its Housing Managers Team meeting on the 16th December 2013 and decided to provide funding for this project.

Recent information from the Census 2011 shows there has been a significant increase of the ethnic minority community in the City, from 2.9% to 8.2% of the population. According to the Census 2011, 15.3% of the current population of Aberdeen were not born in the UK or Ireland (only limited place of birth information is available from the

Census 2001). These figures show that there has been a sizable increase in the ethnic population and the number of those born outside the UK and Ireland and is a sizable proportion of the population. It can be assumed that the issues which were highlighted in the above report have increased in the intervening years, therefore there is a need to give serious consideration to becoming involved again in funding this project. As a benchmark we usually look at the percentage of ethnic minority and migrant workers in the population in the city and compare this with the percentage on our housing application's waiting list. These in the past when we were part of the project could be compared and roughly be the same percentage was being achieved, we could say we had equality in housing allocations. Taking into consideration the increases in recent population figures for these communities, we now have a situation where only 3.3% of housing applicants are from the ethnic minority community and 18.5% of applicants are from the migrant worker community. It would appear that since we have not been involved in the project there has not been the same amount of information and advice being given to the ethnic minority community about their entitlement to local authority housing.

From 1 January 2014 the transitional controls on free movement included in the accession treaties and adopted by the UK and seven other Member States when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, will end. From that date Bulgarians and Romanians will have the freedom to live and work in those eight Member States. There has been a lively debate in the UK about how many Bulgarians and Romanians will come to the UK after 1 January 2014 and the British Government has announced it is looking at the rules governing social security claims as a consequence of this and future EU enlargements. It is not possible to provide any accurate estimate of how many Bulgarian and Romanian nationals (known as "A2" nationals) would be likely to come to Britain from 2014, however it can be assumed some will come to Aberdeen. The key factor that will influence whether A2 nationals seek work in the UK from the beginning of 2014 and beyond will be the likelihood of finding work in Britain compared to other countries to which they will have access. Unlike in 2004, the A2 migrants will have a wide choice of European countries to travel to in search of work as all EU Member States have already opened their borders or will do so on 1 January 2014.

In the absence of the ethnic minority housing outreach worker, training and awareness raising on the Prejudice Incidence Reporting Forms (PIRF) has taken place with housing teams. The number of PIRFs raised tend to focus around housing and neighbourhood disputes.

A dedicated Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker would add value by increasing the efficiency of our response to these communities and free up capacity and resources within mainstream housing front-line teams. This is a good example of partnership working between this Council,

Aberdeenshire Council and local RSLs in making best use of scarce resources.

If it is decided to joint fund this project, officers from this Council would be part of the management committee with officers from the Shire and RSLs. It is proposed the day to day management of the project would be undertaken by Langstane Housing Association (see appendix1). The Project Management Group would receive regular updates and reports on the project from the Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker highlighting any issues which the members of the group can help to resolve.

The work of the project would provide direct support to these communities to ensure they have equal access to housing. They would know their rights and obligations and help to meet their housing needs through the social rented sector and the private sector. There is a perception that these communities are often subject to exploitation in the private rented sector, however work by the project helps to resolve issues for these tenants. The project also plays an important role in ensuring people from these communities have access to welfare benefits they are entitled to and help to address poverty issues for these communities. The main role of the project is to ensure the ethnic minority and migrant worker communities have equal access to housing and related services as the general population.

6. IMPACT

- Corporate - Aberdeen City residents have access to quality, affordable housing. (SOA)
- We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need (SOA).

Public – This report is likely to be of interest to the public, especially the ethnic minority and migrant worker communities in the City. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA), has been completed during completion of this report. This report will enhance the Council's commitment to its general equality duty.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Approval of the recommendations in this report has the capacity to make a positive contribution to the success and effective management of Aberdeen City Council and through its general equality duty and complies with the Equality Act 2010.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing and Committee Report 26 October 2010.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Ethnic Minority Housing Project

1. Introduction and Background to the Report

The Ethnic Minority Housing Project has been running since November 2007. The original funders were Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and the Lintel Trust. In 2010, at the end of the original 3 year funded period, Aberdeen City Council withdrew from the project. Between then and now the funding partners have been Aberdeenshire Council, Castlehill Housing Association, Grampian Housing Association, Langstane Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative.

Project outcomes are:

- Minority ethnic communities are better informed about what their housing options are and how to access them
- There is increased partnership working between housing providers, minority ethnic minority communities, support organisations and other agencies
- There is an increase in the uptake of housing services and a subsequent reduction in homelessness by minority ethnic communities
- Minority ethnic communities are better able to articulate their housing needs and these are better represented in the strategic housing plans of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils.

The project helps and advises any person from a minority ethnic background who meets the project criteria:

- Client has a housing related enquiry or problem
- Client lives in Aberdeenshire or wishes to move into Aberdeenshire
- Client is an Aberdeenshire Council tenant or tenant of the 4 funding partner RSLs
- Client lives in Aberdeen but needs help and advice about RSLs, or needs help with a homelessness application (since this affects their priority with RSLs)

At present the project cannot provide assistance to tenants of Aberdeen City Council or anyone who needs advice, information or assistance specifically about Aberdeen City Council. The project partners would like to invite Aberdeen City Council to rejoin the project to enable a full service to be provided across both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

2. Project Highlights

- The project identified a lack of knowledge and understanding among people from ethnic minority communities about RSLs and the services they provide. Working with the RSL Housing Equalities Working Group, the project has produced a range of information leaflets, posters, banners and other promotional materials.
- The project has been in a position to identify areas of policy and practice which have had a negative impact on people from ethnic minority communities. This has resulted in changes being made by project partners on a number of occasions.
- The project has provided advice, information, support and advocacy to a significant number of clients since it began. During 2012-13 it assisted 91 clients with a wide range of issues including:
 - Overcrowding
 - Unaffordable rent
 - Poor quality accommodation in the private sector
 - Homelessness or threat of homelessness
 - Relationship breakdown and/or domestic violence
 - Lack of understanding of tenancy rights and responsibilities
 - Neighbour problems and harassment
 - Medical problems
 - Rent and Council Tax arrears
 - Poor English or fear of poor English being a barrier to effective communication
 - Lack of knowledge of translation and interpretation services available
 - Entitlement to benefits
 - Lack of understanding of allocation schemes and how they work
- The project has been extremely effective at forming effective working partnership with a wide range of organisations. This has allowed a multi agency approach to be used to great effect, particularly when dealing with very complex cases. Partners the project works with include:
 - All the support groups for ethnic minority communities in the area – GREC, MEAL, the International Centre

- Police Scotland, particularly Diversity Liaison Officers
- Housing and Homelessness Teams in Aberdeen City and Shire councils, and RSLs
- Housing Benefit Teams
- Disabled Persons Housing Service in Aberdeen and Houseability in Aberdeenshire
- SACRO
- Grampian Women's Aid
- English as a Foreign Language centres
- DWP and Jobs Centres
- Social Work Teams in Aberdeen City and Shire councils
- Scottish Legal Aid Board
- Ethnic Minority Law Centre
- The Project has its own website which acts as an information point and signpost for housing related issues. It contains a wide range of information on topics including housing to rent and to buy; housing and other benefits; accessing furniture; links and contacts for a wide range of organisations and agencies. It aims to present a realistic picture of the issues which might face someone moving to Aberdeen from other areas and countries. The website has a steady stream of visitors including people from other countries.
- The project has operated information and advice surgeries and drop-in sessions in a range of venues throughout Aberdeen City and Shire including libraries, community centres, CAB offices and workplaces. This has made the project more accessible to people throughout the area, and has raised the profile of the project and the assistance and support it can provide.

3. Value of the Project

- The project is in a very strong position to help individual ME individuals and families with housing issues. There is no other targeted service in either City or Shire which presently offers this expertise.
- The project worker sits on a variety of committees in both Aberdeen City and Shire and helps to inform and influence policy with regard to ethnic minority communities and housing, for example the Ethnic Minority Forum.
- The project worker supports the work of housing officers and relieves pressure in very busy departments by dealing with

cases which are often complex and time consuming, for example homeless cases.

- The range of cases the project has supported demonstrates that there is a genuine and on-going need for a knowledgeable qualified and experienced specialist worker to support ethnic minority communities in both Aberdeen City and Shire. A range of case studies is available to confirm this.
- The project has a separate identity which means it is seen as being separate to the partner housing providers. This allows the project to be objective and provide effective advocacy on behalf of project clients. This in turn gives ethnic minority communities confidence in the project to offer reliable advice and help. The project is held in high regard by ethnic minority communities. Word of mouth and building trusting relationships over the past five years has been key in achieving this.
- The project has built up a wealth of experience and expertise about the kind of issues facing ethnic minority communities. This means it is extremely effective in dealing with the kind of highly complex cases which commonly present to the project.
- Being involved in the project can help council partners to meet their statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and also support all partners in achieving their objectives regarding equality and diversity.

4. Project Proposal

It is proposed to extend the project for a further three years from 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2017. It is hoped that Aberdeen City Council will re-join the project and the project will then provide a full service in Aberdeen City.

It is clear that there remains a demand for the project and the services it is delivering to people from ethnic minority communities. Whilst the number of migrants arriving in the UK is dropping, the buoyant economic conditions in the north east of Scotland mean that there are still good employment opportunities in this part of the country. People from ethnic minority communities who move into the area are a vulnerable group due to barriers, including communication, lack of knowledge and low income. This means they are vulnerable to being exploited in housing situations.

Other areas where it has been identified that the project can support clients and partner organisations include:

- Ensuring project partners are complying with the requirements of the Scottish Housing Charter;

- Supporting clients through changes in the Welfare System and the introduction of Universal Credit. People from ethnic minority communities have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to these changes and are likely to be disproportionately disadvantaged by them.

To take account of Aberdeen City Council rejoining the project, and also the increase in the scope of the project as outlined above, it is proposed that the post should be increased to a full time one. A draft budget has been prepared on this basis. In the event of Aberdeen City Council not rejoining the project, it is proposed that the post continues on a part time basis, working 18.5 hours per week.

It is proposed that from 1st April 2013 Langstane Housing Association take over the hosting of the project. The project fits into their Support Services Team which has been extended to incorporate compliance with the Scottish Housing Charter and Customer Insight. Langstane also intend to create a short term post to ensure that the equalities and diversity obligations of the Charter are scoped and compliance thereto process mapped. Siting the project within this Team will enable the partnership to have access to Langstane's work in this area and will also provide mentoring support for the Project Worker.

The overall responsibility for the delivery of the project rests with the Project Management Group. The Group meets quarterly and team members include representatives from project partners, the Project Worker and the Project Worker's Line Manager. Issues raised by the Project Worker or any of the partners are discussed and actions agreed. The meetings are recorded. The Project Worker provides a detailed quarterly report in advance of each Project Team meeting, with a selection of recent case histories chosen for their interest and variety, and outcomes (where known) of previous client cases. These arrangements for the management of the project will continue.

Appendix 2

Draft Project Budget:

Ethnic Minority Housing Project - Aberdeen City and Shire Councils and RSLs Project Budget 2014-17

Costs	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Salary Grade 7 (based on 35 hours per week)			
Salary	23115	23808	24284
NI	1536	1582	1629
Pension	2219	2286	2355
Essential Car Users Allowance	822	847	872
Mileage, travel and subsistence (based on 1500 miles at £0.45)	900	927	955
Overhead and management costs	6479	6802	7006
Other Costs			
Mobile phone	120	124	128
Translation/interpretation	1000	1030	1061
Training	1000	1030	1061

Total	37191	38436	39351
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Income

Aberdeen City Council	12397	12812	13117
Aberdeenshire Council	12397	12812	13117
Castlehill Housing Association	3099	3203	3279
Grampian Housing Association	3099	3203	3279
Langstane Housing Association	3099	3203	3279
Tenants First Housing Co-operative	3099	3203	3279

Total	37190	38436	39350
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Notes

3% uplift applied to years 2 and 3