

Creating a Fairer and More Equal Aberdeen



Photo credit: Ethnic Minority Forum 30/11/16 – Liz Howarth

Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)



Summary: Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The Project

GREC undertook community engagement activities on equality outcomes as part of work done to support the Equalities agenda of Aberdeen City Council. **The Equality and Human Rights (EHRC) define an equality outcome as a change achieved as the result of planned work.** Building on GREC's long standing relationships with community groups and forums to identify opportunities, an Equality Development Worker from GREC focused specifically on undertaking the community engagement activities from July – December 2016. The project named, '*Creating a Fairer and More Equal Aberdeen*', utilised surveys and community engagement discussions in order to gain the views of local residents in Aberdeen.

The aim of the project was to provide evidence and recommendations for Aberdeen City Council to help them set their equality outcomes for 2017 – 2021 and review their progress too. In preparing equality outcomes, local authorities must consider evidence relating to equality groups and communities and should take steps to include them in the equality outcomes.

1.2 Surveys and Community Engagement

The '*Creating a Fairer and More Equal Aberdeen*' survey was circulated for a period of eight weeks. On the **9th of September 2016**, the survey went live online and it was closed on the **9th of November 2016**. During this period, **225 people filled in the survey**. The majority of these surveys were completed on paper at community engagement events. The link to the survey was disseminated through various forums including the North East Scotland Equalities Network (NESEN), the Ethnic Minority Forum, the Disability Equity Partnership, and through social media such as the GREC, Aberdeen City Council, Police Scotland and Multi-cultural Aberdeen Facebook page.

Community engagement is a process of involving people in decisions that affect them. It is important that any engagement undertaken have benefits for local people as well as local authorities and organisations. Many groups, organisations and individuals represent a whole range of interests in Aberdeen. These include faith-based groups, local residents groups, local community groups and virtual groups (active on Facebook/social media). GREC staff and volunteers were involved in the community engagement activities. We sought as far as possible to make sure that the engagement activities reflected the diversity of Aberdeen's population. From the **15th of August until the 25th of November**, ten community engagement activities/sessions were undertaken:

- **Generations Working Together (GWT)** (age)
- **Multi Faith Forum** (religion or belief)
- **Ethnic Minority Forum (EMF)** (race/ethnicity)
- **Thai Buddhist Centre** (religion or belief and race/ethnicity)
- **Disability Equity Partnership (DEP)** (disability)
- **Violence Against Women Partnership (VAWP)** (sex)

- **North East Scotland Equalities Network (NESEN)** (*disability*)
- **Learning Disability Group Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire** (*disability*)
- **LGBT + Network event** (*sexual orientation, gender reassignment*)
- **Tea and Talk** (*age*)

1.3 Recommendations/Key Priorities

It is clear from the analysis of the community engagement activities, survey data and literature review, that there are a number of opportunities for Aberdeen City Council moving forward to help make Aberdeen a fairer and more equal place. Over the past four years, progress has been made concerning equality and fairness but there are always improvements which can be made. There are a number of recommendations and key priorities for the new equality outcomes, which reflect these findings. These are:

Recommendation 1 (R1) – Work in partnership to organise a regular/annual ‘Doors Open Day’ for equalities groups (across all protected characteristics groups)– aim to break down barriers with equality groups promoting their work and activities so that more people are aware of how equality is being advanced in the city..

Recommendation 2 (R2) – Support city-wide inclusive events such as Aberdeen Pride for the LGBT + community – promote awareness and visibility.

Recommendation 3 (R3) – More training for front line council workers to increase awareness of disabilities, particularly around hidden disabilities. Introduce an equalities ‘mystery shopper’ to find out how it may be for disabled people using services.

Recommendation 4 (R4) – Improve the accessibility of Aberdeen City Council’s website in terms of layout, information etc.

Recommendation 5 (R5) – Create and disseminate an up to date list of available meeting spaces/rooms for community groups in Aberdeen – share resources across groups.

Recommendation 6 (R6) – Increase opportunities for different religious and belief groups to come together and share information through forums and activities. Continue to support the work of the Multi-faith forum.

Recommendation 7 (R7) – A joint up approach to education, in its widest sense, around equality and related issues.

Recommendation 8 (R8) – Develop and support projects to get young people engaged and to feel part of the wider community so that more young people feel part of their local community – particular need for more sports and activities for girls – address negative media portrayal. .

Recommendation 9 (R9) – Continue to keep a focus on developing suitable accommodation that meets the needs of Gypsy/Travellers resident in Aberdeen, as

well as challenging the deeply held prejudices that continue to be held towards Gypsy/Traveller communities.

Recommendation 10 (R10) – Aberdeen to become a “Compassionate City”, using this theme to promote respect between ethnic minority communities, as well as providing a basis for more education and awareness raising. Increase knowledge of the Prejudice and Discrimination reporting system so that ethnic minorities, and other targeted groups, are aware that they can take action if they are being discriminated against. Send clear message that the city and local authority cares about everyone in Aberdeen as human beings who are welcomed. Continue to build on the good practice shown by Aberdeen City Council working with Syrian refugees in the city.

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