

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

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

3. CURRENT SITUATION

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

3.3 Appendix 2 contains a comprehensive report which sets out how women's everyday experiences in Aberdeen are affected by gender inequality and what can be done to tackle the systemic barriers which are built into systems to make life fairer for women in Aberdeen.

3.4 The report presents 116 recommendations across four themes:

- Care and Caring (Childcare and unpaid care)
- Safety (Violence against women/ community safety)
- Welfare/ Benefits
- Health and Wellbeing (Accessing support and health)

3.5 Page 100 of the report in Appendix 2 lists the 116 recommendations made; 96 are to the Council and the other 19 are to the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, Scottish and UK Government, Police Scotland and Financial Services Ombudsman. These are also listed in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.11 below.

3.6 Recommendations for Aberdeen City Council

To Continue:

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

To Consider:

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

To Do:

Care and Caring

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

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

Unpaid Care

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

Safety

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

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

Welfare/ Benefits

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

Health and Wellbeing

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

To review and publish findings:

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

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

3.7 Recommendations for Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership

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

3.8 Recommendations for Scottish Government

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

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

3.9 Recommendations for UK Government

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

3.10 Recommendations for Police Scotland

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

3.11 Recommendations for Financial Services Ombudsman

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

3.12 Next Steps

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

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK

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

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

8. OUTCOMES

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

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

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

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

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Executive Summary

Appendix 2 Aberdeen Gender Inequality and Poverty Report 2025

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Michelle Crombie
Title	Strategic Lead. Prevention and Community Empowerment
Email Address	mcrombie@aberdeencity.gov.uk