

Equalities Participation Network – April 21st 2022

Present: Myshele Haywood (GREC), Ru Carroll (Four Pillars), Roslynn Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Stefan Georghe (GREC), Carol Hannaford (sheltered housing), Zuzana Jatelova (Sunnybank Community Centre), Molly McCall (GREC), Fay Morrison (community member, tenants' participation group), Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs), Christa Reid (DEP and other groups), Claire Smith (Police), Bertha Yakubu (African Women's Group).

Apologies: Libby Hillhouse, Shola Ajide, Marion McLaughlin, Faiza Nacef, Mateusz Lagoda.

No Community Spotlight this month.

Follow-up from Last Meeting

Somebody Cares – Christa shared further information:

- The retail 'megastore' in Hazlehead sells second hand goods, open to the public Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 5pm. Hazledene Road, AB15 8QU. More info: [facebook.com/SomebodyCaresRetail](https://www.facebook.com/SomebodyCaresRetail)
- The main warehouse in Altens is open to the public the first Saturday of each month for £1 entry. Pavillion 5, Craigshaw Road. More info: [facebook.com/SomebodyCaresScotland](https://www.facebook.com/SomebodyCaresScotland)
- Referrals can be made by any wellbeing provider or charity – doesn't need to be through the council or NHS.

Taxi Issues – Faiza met with Alan Thomson and Sandy Munro (ACC Licensing Committee) on 29 March, and shared further information via email:

- Regarding Sainsbury's car park: Licensing Committee did not send an enforcement officer to Sainsbury's, but taxi drivers were emailed a reminder not to block pick-up and drop-off areas. This came after complaints that the area was being used as a taxi rank and spaces were being blocked. Managers at Sainsbury's could be asked informally to introduce waiting areas for taxis supporting people with disabilities – but the Licensing Committee does not have a remit to ask for this. *Unclear who should have the conversation then?*
 - Roslynn added (during EPN meeting) that drivers have been waiting in the car park rather than by the shop. They used to be able to wait by the bottom door, which is no longer in use because of theft problems.
 - Regarding helping customers with disabilities: all taxi drivers have received training to consider and offer 'reasonable support' to customers with additional needs. Most drivers continue to offer this support – any exceptions should be reported to the Licensing Committee so it can be investigated and addressed.
 - If someone in your community has an incident where a taxi driver refuses to provide reasonable support, they should leave a message on this number – 01224522449 – or email licensing@aberdeencity.gov.uk – with as many details as possible. For example, the driver's name and car registration if possible, place and time when the incident happened, and as a description of what has happened.
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What's New?

Folk discussed equality issues have been on their mind over the past month, and who should be responsible for dealing with these issues:

- **Out-dated rules assistive technology** – mobility scooters can be much lighter and more portable than electric wheelchairs these days, but they are not recognised as a ‘necessity’ by Occupational Therapy. So when a client’s family buys a mobility scooter (with their own money), they are charged £2000 to install a ramp for the council property where the client lives. Alison MacLeod from the Health & Social Care Partnership will be raising the issue with the ACC Disability Action Group, but it seemed important to mention here as well.
 - **Heating/energy price rises** – especially for people with No Recourse to Public Funds.
 - **Domestic Abuse** – there was recently a high profile case in Nigeria, where a woman from Glasgow was killed by her husband. This has sparked a conversation among African women in Aberdeen, who will be holding a meeting to discuss domestic violence in more depth.
 - **Counselling and other services** – Ethnic minority people often find it difficult to be properly understood by White/Scottish counsellors, social workers, etc, because so much cultural background needs to be explained. This can become exhausting and demoralising. Community peer support groups provide an important alternative, but mainstream services should also seek to be more inclusive.
 - **Anti-trans campaigners in St Nicholas Sq** – have not been out recently, but Four Pillars now has a direct contact with police officers from the Safer Cities Unit, so know who to contact if they come back. On 17 May there will be a stall in St Nicholas Sq for the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.
 - **Charity Scammers:** the office of Aberdeen Action on Disability was recently targeted by a scammer, claiming he was abandoned by a friend with no money, seeking “money to return to Banchory.” Staff explained this was not possible, but they let him sit with a cup of tea while they figured out what to do. A minister at a nearby church warned that he was likely a scammer, as the church was recently targeted in a similar way. When AAD staff mentioned calling the police to help the man get back to Banchory, he quickly disappeared. Claire (from Police Scotland) confirmed these kinds of scams are well known to Police. There seems to be a general increase in scams (particularly cyberscams) targeting third sector/community organisations over the last year or so.
 - **Upperkirkgate/Broad Street Crossing:** At the last EPN meeting the issue was raised of the (lack of) automated crossing at Upperkirkgate outside Marischal College. The council committed to installing a new crossing here some time ago but there has been no progress. The unusual road layout and lack of raised kerbs makes it dangerous for those with visual or physical impairments to access essential services at Marischal College. The issue was raised with Cllr Ian Yuill, who promised to make it a priority.
 - **Update:** a Police Scotland Sergeant highlighted the issue at a meeting with an ACC Customer Services Manager, who said they were not aware of any access issues in the area around Marischal College. They said they would escalate the matter with their management to see if it could be addressed.
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Hate Crime discussion

Hate Crime is any crime that's motivated by prejudice against a person's race or ethnicity (including nationality), religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity. It can have devastating effects on individuals and communities, but most hate crimes are never reported.

Previous campaigns focused on perpetrators (like the 'racists not welcome' posters) – GREC and the local police want to develop a campaign focused on communities, to raise awareness about hate crime and how to report it. According to research (including research by GREC) there are many reasons why victims don't report hate crime.

Top reasons:

- Doesn't seem worth reporting
- Don't want to make a fuss
- Won't be taken seriously

Other reasons:

- Don't know how/what to report
- Uncomfortable with police, or previous negative experience with police
- Too complicated/difficult to report, or not having the time to report
- Fear of backlash/reprisals
- Language barriers

Roslynn noted that AAD received a 30 page document from the police about local crime – Claire confirmed it was from the Crime Reduction Team – anyone can get on the mailing list for this, and it can also be shared through the EPN.

Roslynn also mentioned Third Party Reporting – where charities and other organisations are trained to help people report hate crime. Reviving this will be part of the campaign – for now, the focus is on barriers to reporting.

Discussion questions in breakout groups:

- Do the barriers listed above match up with your experience? Are any missing?
- Which barriers should be prioritised?
- With that in mind, what would a good campaign look like?

Group 1

- Barriers definitely ring true.
- For many people it's too much hassle – they just want to move on.
 - Need to prioritise your time and live your life – many of us get insulted all the time.
 - Just put your head down.

- Sometimes it's better to deal with issues informally – challenge when people insult you in the workplace etc – often it comes from ignorance and people don't realise they're being hurtful.
- Not sure what the process of reporting entails. Seems a lot of effort to find out.
- What makes something worth reporting? What makes it a hate **crime**, rather than just someone being rude? Seems like such a grey area. Everyone understands it differently.
 - Different people will interpret an incident with different levels of severity/harm – depends on the person, their past experience/background, the circumstances, whether they know the perpetrator or it's a stranger, etc.
 - Other people's interpretation can be an influence, too – if you go to friends for advice and everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet, you might be convinced to escalate or downplay an incident, based on what they say.
 - If there are two (or more) perpetrators, or no other witnesses – I won't be believed, so why bother reporting?
- Many issues stem from school, kids being picked on who don't fit in – more education is needed to improve tolerance and understanding.
 - Lots of good work is already happening in schools, but more is needed – Scottish kids are often ignorant of other cultures.
- General distrust of police, bad experiences – in many communities the police are just another threat.
 - The political climate makes it hard to trust anyone in authority – people are worried about their livelihood, not wanting to risk their visa, etc.
 - Reporting might make things worse – fear of escalation – asking questions and giving the wrong answer – will it bring me more trouble?
- Place where things happen determine whether it's reported – whether there's community support for reporting – each community needs to decide what they're willing to put up with, and what they're willing to support people to stand against – not just an individual issue, needs to be a community effort, community support – too much to ask of individuals and families.
- Fatalism – this is not my country – I don't have the right to complain.
- Mixed messages – these things are illegal, but people seem to get away with them. Racism is wrong but it's on TV and everywhere else – leaders don't get in trouble for being bullies, so it seems dangerous to report bullies closer to home.
- Hate crime is about fear – it's ironic and wrong that fear stops people getting help.

Elements of a good campaign:

- Important to clarify things as much as possible – fight fear with information.
 - What can/should be reported? Why is it worthwhile? (not just about the single incident, also establishing patterns, etc)
 - How exactly to report?
 - What happens next? Will the police come to my house? Will they interview the perpetrator? Will they say I was the one to report them?

- What are the possible outcomes? Will the person be arrested? (or lose their job, or get evicted) Will I have to go to court? Are there other options like mediation or moving to another flat or another job?
- Accessibly designed – not just social media – using radio, print, different languages, etc
 - Simple, straightforward language
 - Getting the message across through stories/videos – what hate crime is, what it looks like, what to do about it. What’s at stake.
 - What it feels like – to raise awareness among bystanders – personal stories are powerful (but with more context than the creepy mug shot posters in bus shelters).
- Two different kinds of posters/messages – one for perpetrators, one for victims?
 - Most important to focus on victims + empowerment.
 - Silence only empowers the abuser.
- Improving community relationships with police.
 - Police must engage with communities – not just expecting people to go to HQ.
 - Connecting in informal spaces, teaching and learning, speaking and listening, two way dialogue. TAKES TIME. Building relationships. Cups of tea. Not just seeing the cops when there’s trouble. Find out what crime means to communities.
 - Community led walkabouts, gardens, bringing people together, community spaces, outreach. Police presence at events etc.
 - Targeting engagement – not treating every community as a monolith – not expecting different communities or subgroups to mix with each other.
 - Everyone realises budgets restrict police engagement with communities but it’s a false economy in the long run – community policing catches problems while they’re still small – it was also noted that the city should be getting a full time equalities officer soon.

Group 2

Do the barriers listed above match up with your experience? Are any missing?

It was widely agreed that the identified barriers are accurate. The group felt that in general these barriers will be more significant for minority communities.

Which barriers should be prioritised?

"Doesn't seem worth reporting" should be a priority as it underpins or contributes to many of the other barriers. Often an incident does not seem worth reporting because by the time police are able to respond, the incident has passed and the perpetrators are gone. However, reporting is still valuable after the fact because it helps inform police intelligence and investigations about criminal behaviour. This should be made clear in campaign messaging.

"Uncomfortable with police" is another barrier to be prioritised. If community relations with police were better, many of the other barriers would be less problematic and people would be more

inclined to report. Some migrant communities in particular are used to a much more aggressive style of policing- it must be made clear to communities experiencing hate crime that Police Scotland are different. Christa shared an example from her time in the police of a group of ESOL learners she had a positive relationship with, however when they learned she was a police officer, the dynamic changed and they were no longer comfortable around her.

With that in mind, what would a good campaign look like?

A successful campaign will need to be promoted across multiple forms of media in order to be truly accessible to all groups/communities. Social media campaigns will not have broad enough reach alone. Utilize radio, print media, local TV, physical posters/resources in community spaces etc. The campaign should connect with people at their level.

It is important to decide whether the messaging will aim to reach victims or perpetrators of hate crime as tone will likely be very different.

As noted above, many minority communities most likely to encounter hate crime have uncomfy relationships with police, so an emphasis on community reporting and a refresh of third party training would be valuable.

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Upcoming events:

- 21 May – Immigration & Hate Crime Fair at the Credo Centre, hosted by Aberdeen University Law Society (time TBC)
- 28 May – Grampian Pride – more info: grampianpride.org

Information from other networks: given the growing number of documents being shared from other networks and organisations, Myshele will set up a separate webpage for this, linked to the EPN page, to avoid clogging everyone's emails. The link will be in each email so you'll be able to find it easily.

Next Meeting: Thursday 26 May 2022, 5:00-6:30 on Zoom

- Carol Hannaford will be talking about changes to housing in Aberdeen, along with her colleague Rachel Harrison, a Locality Inclusion Manager. Spotlight TBC.