

## Equalities Participation Network – May 26<sup>th</sup> 2022

**Present:** Myshele Haywood (GREC), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love Church), Ru Carroll (Four Pillars), Carol Hannaford (sheltered housing), Libby Hillhouse (NESS), Daniel Meinel (Cyrenians), Fay Morrison (community member, tenants' participation group), Baldeep McGarry (ACC Equalities), Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs), Christa Reid (DEP and other groups).

**Apologies:** Marion McLaughlin, Christa Reid, Zuzana Jatelova, Roslynn Fowler, Mateusz Lagoda.

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### **Guest Speaker: Rachel Harrison, ACC Locality Inclusion Manager**

Rachel shared a wealth of information about council housing in Aberdeen. Some key points:

- ACC owns/manages **22,000 residential properties** (1 in 5 homes in Aberdeen).
- There is a range of different types (flats, houses, etc), predominantly with two or three bedrooms – smaller and larger homes are in short supply.
- Most of the homes are for **general needs**, but there is also **amenity, sheltered and very sheltered housing**, for people who need more support.
- ACC is in the midst of **building 2000 new homes** – in Smithfield, Manor Walk, Dyce, Summerhill, Auchmill, Kincorth and Tillydrone – they are also upgrading existing homes, improving storage, insulation, disabled access, etc.
- **Housing is allocated on the basis of need:**
  - Priority to those with urgent need (e.g. homeless or at risk of homelessness, looked after young people, etc), and a need for housing with support.
  - Everyone else is allocated points based on how well their current property meets their needs, their security of tenure, facilities, etc.
  - There are different lists for people already living in ACC council housing or other social housing in Aberdeen, and those who are not.
- **Mutual exchange scheme** – swap homes with another household – avoid the waiting list.
- **Matchmaker scheme** – allows private landlords to rent to people on the waiting list.
- **Choice based lettings** – new process later this year, to allow people to choose where they want to live, rather than being allocated in the first instance.
- **Housing & Support Service** – new structure, single point of contact for all tenants, with each housing officer covering a smaller number of tenants – more regular contact.
- **Housing Access Service** – focus on allocations and preventing homelessness.

**There's a lot more information in the attached presentation – please have a look at it!**

One EPN member commended ACC for its excellent upkeep of council properties, they have a friend who's lived in a council house for 35 years, and has been very happy with maintenance of both the home and the garden, never had any problems. Another noted that their clients have had good experiences through the temporary accommodation service.

## Q&A

- **Are there other ways the council is increasing its housing stock?** ACC can buy back council properties when people want to sell for any reason. But there is not a programme to take existing properties into council ownership.
- **Is there any information on non-residential properties that community groups can buy?**  
List of properties available for community asset transfer:  
[aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/community-asset-transfer/assets-available-community-asset-transfer](http://aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/community-asset-transfer/assets-available-community-asset-transfer)
- **Who deals with private property rentals?**  
The **Private Leasing Team** deals with landlord registrations, tenant complaints, etc. More info here: [aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/information-landlords/private-tenants-advice-and-support](http://aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/information-landlords/private-tenants-advice-and-support)  
The **Empty Homes Officer** encourages people to rent out empty properties. There is also a form where you can report empty homes to be checked on by the council. More info here: [aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/advice-and-information-empty-home-owners](http://aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/advice-and-information-empty-home-owners)
- **The process of getting housing and benefits can be very confusing, especially for people with learning disabilities. Is any support available?** The **Financial Inclusion Team** can help people navigate the application process and ensure they get what they're entitled to. More info: [aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/benefits-and-advice/get-benefits-and-money-advice](http://aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/benefits-and-advice/get-benefits-and-money-advice)
- **When people fall into rent arrears, the letters can be very frightening, causing more stress and avoidance. Can anything be done about this?** Unfortunately the legal team requires certain phrases to be included in the letters – but the wording and tone can be looked at, and the new role of housing officers (e.g. providing support) should help.
- **A client was told they would have to leave Aberdeen to get supportive accommodation?**  
This is not true – housing works closely with social work, and supportive accommodation for a range of different needs is available across the city. Charities also provide supportive accommodation and advice: [inspireptl.org.uk](http://inspireptl.org.uk) , [cornerstone.org.uk](http://cornerstone.org.uk) (note: this information is available in the community directory – [grec.co.uk/community-directory](http://grec.co.uk/community-directory) )#
- **What's the current waiting list?** About 5000 people – but this includes people without a housing need (e.g. those who want to move into a new place, but don't need to).

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## AOCB

**Housing needs assessment** – GREC has been asked by ACC to help with their housing needs assessment, especially for ethnic minority communities. Focus groups will take place in the second half of June – **please get in touch with Myshela if someone in your group would be interested in taking part.**

### Upcoming events:

- **Grampian Pride** – 28 May
- **Kilt Walk** – benefiting Guide Dogs – 29 May from Potarch or Crathes to Duthie Park
- **LGBT+ (and allies) picnic** – 11 June, 11:30am, Duthie Park

**Next Meeting: Thursday 30 June 2022, 5:00-6:30 on Zoom, topic TBC**