

Equalities Participation Network – 28 September 2023

Present: Molly McCall (GREC), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love), Ru Carroll (Four Pillars), Roslynn Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Ells McHaffie (Guide Dogs), Fay Morrison, Hussein Patwa, Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs). **Apologies:** Zuzana Jatelova, Mateusz Lagoda.

ACC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Event

- Ross, Maria Jose & Myshele helped facilitate EDI event earlier in the month, where several EPN members attended.
- Issues around roads, transport, bus gates, LEZ were raised by Mary & Roslynn. Some of these issues have been discussed for years with very little progress.
- Ells suggested council decision makers should receive awareness training on accessibility etc. Lots of local organisations who could provide this kind of training at low/no cost.
- Hussein was disappointed the turnout at the event was so low. Is low engagement impacting the lack of progress on certain issues? Is engagement low because we are suffering consultation fatigue, especially as so much is now being done online?
- It was noted there were no high ranking staff (officers or counsellors) at the meeting- burden incorrectly falling on frontline staff rather than actual decision-makers. Counsellors and Officers should be represented. How do we change this, how do we force the “top brass” to care? Can the EPN take any action to address this, as there is a lot of expertise among the group- can we send a letter or otherwise let them know we are “watching”?
- Lots of talk about improving processes around EDI consultations. The impact assessments are done, but then effectively ignored and there is no accountability. Consultations alone are not enough, furthermore there is a lack of transparency around the process and cohesion- **who** is being consulted? Not charities as far as we can tell!
- Can relevant charities pull together to work towards addressing these issues? So many of us are at least partially funded by the council- so may be unwilling to criticise them which may create a barrier to this kind of approach.
- Mary recently attended an RNIB meeting with First Bus. Would have been good if this was broader- not just for folk with visual impairments, but everyone whose disability etc impacts their use of public transport. Event was still beneficial, ACC could learn from it.
- Access to ACC was discussed- Marischal College not easily accessible, without even mentioning issues of phone lines and website. Not everyone can use new self-service machines, often that is only option- the front desk is frequently unstaffed nowadays.
- Roslynn shared a story of going to MC to renew blue badge, where she was ferried between five different employees as no one knew how to assist her. Hussein knows of several individuals for whom going to MC causes intense panic, like going to the Jobcentre.

Locality Plan Refresh Engagement

- ACC are running a series of engagement events over October and November in different localities across the city, to collect feedback in order to update locality improvement plans.
- There will also be an online consultation opening 6th Oct for those unable to attend in person- this is linked on the posters via QR code.

- Issues with library QR codes were raised- when local libraries shut down, posters were placed at their entrances with QR codes that did not direct to anywhere. We checked to ensure this was not the case for the LOIP posters and they seem to be working.
- EPN members do not have the promotional materials for these events yet, so we will forward them to the mailing list next week.

What's New?

1. Third Party Reporting:

- ADA hosted recent TPR forum and were supposed to be hosting another on 19th Oct, however this was cancelled. It will take place outside Marischal College from 5-7pm instead in the Police Scotland trailer. We should email TPRCs and EPN members to invite them along.
- Ru had reservations about this event- seems like a completely different kind of event than what was originally planned. What's the point of an engagement group to plan these things if PS then unilaterally change the plans?
- New flyers and posters for TPRCs have been printed and distributed.

2. Police Scotland Policies

- Police Scotland new criminal investigation policy on corroborative evidence raises concerns for disabled people and others- to the point people are feeling the need to invest in bodycams to keep themselves safe. A counsellor from the Shire is collating public feedback on this. Hussein will share relevant information.

3. Brain Health Scotland

- Mary attended a Brain Health Scotland meeting recently- they are currently seeking individuals between 40-60 to receive preventative treatment for Alzheimer's for research project.
- They will also be opening a unit on King Street to provide testing for anyone who has memory issues.

4. Vaccinations

- Concerns among older people who have not yet received dates for COVID & flu vaccines- however these seem to be getting distributed now. Related issue is that people are getting appointments far away from them- likely due to NHS strain, but obviously not ideal for those affected.

5. Four Pillars Funding

- Four Pillars have received a large donation as well as the public fundraiser, so looks like they are safe for now after losing major funding earlier this year.
- They will be running a pop up charity shop on George St from 15th-20th Oct approximately, all welcome!

Future Plans

- Fay noted that officers/counsellors, on the rare occasion they do attend LOIPs, don't really engage. Linked with issues from EDI event discussed above. How to improve engagement from Council decision makers could be a topic for further discussion at a future meeting.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 26 October, 4:00-5:00pm

Topic: Budget Consultation