

Equalities Participation Network – 28 November 2024

Present: Myshele Haywood (GREC), Anne Knight (Fairer Aberdeen Fund), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love Church), Roslynn & Lesley Ann Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Carol Hannaford (ACC sheltered housing), Linzi Harrow (ACC), Baldeep McGarry (ACC) Marion McLaughlin (Aurora Autism Consulting), Fay Morrison (several groups), Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs), Allison Wilkie (Deafblind Scotland).

Apologies: Matt Carter, Ells Mchaffie, Karen Quinn, John Whitfield.

Chronic Pain Appointment Day

Roslynn went to the first chronic pain appointment day, which was held in Northfield. It was run by the Health & Social Care Partnership, Sport Aberdeen and the NHS. She reported that it was really useful, folk were able to speak with a physio and other healthcare workers. A range of different groups represented, including a research group from RGU.

Several people expressed interest in similar events. Marion pointed out that autistic people often experience pain differently, and this is important for healthcare workers to understand.

The next Chronic Pain Appointment Day will be 5 February, in the Bon Accord Centre Vaccination Hub.

Fairer Aberdeen Fund – Anne Knight

Anne spoke about the Fairer Aberdeen Fund (FAF) – what it is, how it works, and how and when your group can apply for funding. **Myshele will circulate FAF's latest annual report.**

- The Fairer Aberdeen Fund **aims to tackle poverty and deprivation** in Aberdeen City.
- It is run by a board – which includes made up of community representatives from priority areas (Fay has been involved in this capacity), plus representatives from the Council, Aberdeen Health & Social Care Partnership, Police Scotland and ACVO.
- Priority areas are based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation: Cummings Park, Heathryfold, Mastrick, Middlefield, Northfield, Seaton, Tillydrone, Torry, and Woodside.
- Originally it was part of the Fairer Scotland Fund, with funding ring-fenced for regeneration areas. When this came to an end in 2014, Aberdeen City Council decided to continue it locally, combined with a few other funds, as the Fairer Aberdeen Fund.
- The fund distributed £1.5 million to 35 community projects in 2023-24, supporting work in priority areas and across the city with vulnerable groups.
- **Most projects are funded for three years.**
- The current cycle runs to the end of this financial year – so **the Fund will be open for new applications in March 2025** (it's unclear exactly how much money will be available, as this is decided in the budget each year).
- **Application forms and further details will be available on 9 January 2025.** Myshele will circulate the information after that date.

Other ways FAF provides funding

- Any extra funds (this year it's £20,000) go into **Participatory Budgeting** in at-risk areas – local residents attend events with presentations on each proposed project, they vote on which projects get funding (often all projects get funded), and any that are unsuccessful get advice on where other funding is available. The idea is to bring communities together and fund smaller projects. Some Localities also hold Participatory Budgeting events, these are not funded by FAF.
- Projects are monitored every six months by staff from the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), or Community Learning and Development (CLD).
- The process has been supported since 2007 by a group called Regeneration Matters, where guests from funded projects speak about what's happening and how it's going.
- Regeneration Matters also has a **Community Support Fund**, which covers small grants for training, capacity building, etc.

Q&A

- Roslynn – it can be difficult for some groups to get funding – Aberdeen Action on Disability has tried several times, even being invited back after being rejected once, but preference seems to be given to another organisation with a potential conflict of interest (FAF staff person with a personal connection to an employee of a funded organisation).
- Anne – if there's a conflict of interest, that person is usually not involved in decision making. Also, anyone at FAF can speak with folk about other funding that may be available.
- Lesley – for AAD, the problem might be that the office is in Bridge of Don, which isn't a priority area, even though they work with people across Aberdeen.
- Anne – the next round of funding may be a bit more flexible geographically.
- **What are the criteria for 3-year funded projects? What kinds of projects are funded?**
 - Based in priority areas, benefitting those communities
 - OR, working to tackle poverty outside of priority areas
 - Priority groups include people who are on low incomes, unemployed, disabled, ethnic minorities, or disabled.
 - Key themes and targets come from Community Planning Aberdeen.
 - Organisations tend to re-apply for core funding to help deliver services.
 - **Examples:** community flats, food banks, debt/benefit advice, employability projects, SHMU, CFINE, Mental Health Aberdeen.
- **Can FAF provide support in making applications?**
 - Yes – get in touch with Anne: AKnight@aberdeencity.gov.uk or Susan: SThoms@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Planning for 2025

- The next EPN meeting will be in January (online), discussing ACC Equality Outcomes.
 - Some folk would like to move the time to slightly earlier, and also want to consider
 - February meeting to be in-person – Myshele will ask for thoughts on this after Christmas.
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What's New? (equality issues to note)

Several people raised concerns about **changing bus routes and pedestrian routes in the city centre**, especially for older people, those with visual or hearing impairments, or mobility issues:

- Shola – there is a strong sense that the city is not taking care of elderly people, and ignoring their needs.
- Carol – lack of buses on Broad Street made it very difficult for people to attend a sheltered housing meeting.
- Lesley – guide dogs are trained to follow specific routes – too many changes too quickly presents a risk to both dogs and humans.
- (on behalf of Mary) – tactiles are still incorrect in several places in the city centre (confusing and dangerous for guide dogs and people with visual impairments), and there is still no safe crossing at the corner of Broad Street and Upperkirkgate.
- Lesley – it seems that disabled people's needs are not taken into consideration when plans are made. They may look good on paper, but are not user friendly for vulnerable people.
Disabled people are made to navigate an unnecessary assault course.
- Myshele – not just disabled people – lots of people are affected by frequent and often poorly-signposted changes, including people who struggle to read English, low-income people who rely on buses to get to work, and people with children in prams who have to navigate the city centre.
- Roslynn – for example, in previous years, the Christmas market had a lane along the front of businesses facing Broad Street, where people could walk through. This year, people need to navigate the market while it's open, or while it's closed, walk all the way around through Marischal Square.
- Wouldn't it be less disruptive to have the Christmas market in Belmont Street, or even in Union Terrace Gardens?
- Baldeep suggested contacting Adrian Watson from Aberdeen Inspired, or someone on his team, to ask if they're thinking about the impact of these events on vulnerable people.
Myshele to follow this up after Christmas.

Marion raised the issue that whoever organised the 'umbrella project' (placing umbrellas above Shiprow to 'raise awareness' about neurodiversity) did not reach out to any neurodiverse organisations in Aberdeen.

Carol and Fay pointed out that the Tall Ships event (19-22 July 2025) has started recruiting volunteers in Torry. They wondered whether they are considering disabled access and other related issues.

Shola let everyone know that Fountain of Love and ABZ Works got funding to support 50 people in Torry and Tillydrone into employment, and they are planning to continue this project in 2025. Please contact him for details: olushola.ajide@fountainoflove.org.uk

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 30 January, 4:00-5:00pm, online.
Discussing ACC Equality Outcomes.**

Please note, no meeting in December!