

Equalities Participation Network – 27 February 2025

Present: Myshele Haywood (GREC), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love Church), Roslynn Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Carol Hannaford (ACC sheltered housing), Linzi Harrow (ACC), Eilidh Mackinnon (Cyrenians/EVAA), Ells Mchaffie (Guide Dogs), Marion McLaughlin (Aurora Autism Consulting), Fay Morrison (several groups), Allison Wilkie (Deafblind Scotland).

Apologies: Matt Carter, Grace Milne, Mary Rasmussen, John Whitfield.

Discussion of ACC proposed Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029

Myshele introduced the proposed new outcomes – goals that the Council is working towards for 2025-29, followed by discussion of each one. *ACC's proposed actions for each outcome are copied to the end of these notes.*

Roslynn pointed out that all the outcomes are very wide, and it will take awhile to digest the info and speak to everyone. Important to get it right.

Equality Outcome 1: All people can access information and services, with systemic, social, and physical barriers identified and minimised.

Marion queried about the details – what exactly is proposed, budget, etc.

Myshele screen-shared the list of proposed actions (*see end of these notes*) to clarify.

Marion:

- Consultation is not enough – aim should be co-production, community should be involved, with remuneration for their time.
- 'With focus on' statements in general – not useful – acknowledging some groups are more marginalised than others, but important to consider all groups.
- Where is the 'inclusive language' guidance coming from? What is the process/budget for developing this?
- Proposal to co-develop an action plan for September 2025 – how will this be done? If aiming for six months from now, where are the working groups now?

Ells: access panels are not listened to, people give the same advice multiple times and eventually give up. Other places – like Nairn – have excellent access panels that are able to make positive changes – why not Aberdeen?

Roslynn: issues were brought up years ago, and nothing happened, so people get fed up. But similar groups work well in other places, so it's not impossible. Also there's a real sense of barriers to getting involved.

Ells: in the shift from previous access panel to Disability Equity Partnership, certain people were not invited back – perception that people who challenged the status quo were excluded.

Carol: six locality events are being planned to discuss various local strategies – instead of consultation overload, asking people in local areas, what are you interested in? Trying to be more flexible and listen to people. Maybe there can be a table at these events to ask people about the Equality Outcomes? Two events are planned for Thursday evenings, the rest are at weekends.

Roslynn: useful to speak with people face to face – similar model to the chronic pain event, which worked very well – lets you reach more people in a meaningful way.

Marion: large events can be overwhelming for some groups.

Linzi: there will also be targeted engagement in smaller events.

Equality Outcome 2: All people can participate and help shape decisions that affect them.

Marion: seems to not centre people – more top-down than co-production.

Alison: lots to digest before giving making any specific points.

Roslynn: most of the people making decisions are not listening. The groups are there, but nobody's asking them. EPN has a voice. We can put something together from 60 different groups to say, this is what we want.

Marion: I want them to say, let's co-design the next steps. Money should be spent on things that help people. Here's the budget, how would you spend it? People writing the risk assessments should be consulting with communities.

Equality Outcome 3: Aberdeen City Council will develop inclusive infrastructure that meets the needs of people who use it.

Marion: good to see the social model of disability mentioned – should also include the UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities (Link on equalityhumanrights.com).

Ells: taxi and bus drivers have to do awareness training – all ACC staff who work with the public should do this – in person, not online.

Roslynn: Mary does training with councillors every year.

Linzi: trainings for councillors are not mandatory, but they are typically well-attended.

Marion: it would be good to have a day where they meet folk from different communities – too often, trainings are given by people without experience of the topic they're training about (like autism training from a neurotypical person, or racism training from a White Scottish person).

Alison: all training from Deafblind Scotland is from people with lived experience.

Shola: Fountain of Love is still looking for volunteer befrienders to help with loneliness and social isolation. All welcome.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 27 March, 4:00-5:00pm, online.

Topic: TBC

Details of proposed outcomes and lists of proposed actions contributing to the outcomes:

Equality Outcome 1: All people can access information and services, with systemic, social, and physical barriers identified and minimised.

- We will improve how we collect, analyse and utilise data to gain better understanding of barriers to access with a focus on Age, Disability, Race and poverty.
 - By September 2025, we will co-develop and share sustainable and achievable action plans.
 - We will communicate widely any changes to critical processes we undertake.
 - We will improve on sharing results and outcomes of consultation and engagement exercises.
 - We will develop more data dashboards that will allow us to disaggregate data and better understand the impact of intersectionality.
 - We will update and better promote internal guidance to employees on inclusive language, accessibility and alternative formats.
 - We will develop resources to help individuals understand our processes, consultation topics and feel confident in contributing their views. This includes workshops, informational materials, and support from our staff.
 - We will promote opportunities for employment, volunteering and training within communities.
 - We will increase our use of social media and other communication channels to share events and opportunities to get involved.
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Equality Outcome 2: All people can participate and help shape decisions that affect them.

- We will provide multiple channels for participation, including online platforms, face-to-face meetings, and written submissions, making sure that people with different abilities and resources can engage effectively.
 - Our outreach efforts will target diverse communities, ensuring that we reach underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and those from various socio-economic backgrounds.
 - We will maintain open lines of communication, keeping the public informed about the consultation process, key milestones, and how their input is being used. Regular updates will be shared via our website, social media, and community news bulletins.
 - We will regularly evaluate our processes, seeking feedback from participants to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the process remains effective and inclusive.
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Equality Outcome 3: Aberdeen City Council will develop inclusive infrastructure that meets the needs of people who use it.

- Inclusive infrastructure considers physical, social, cultural and procedural aspects of our daily operation.
- We will implement the Social Model of Disability, which understands disability as resulting from barriers created by our buildings, processes, systems, and culture, rather than being caused by an individual's impairment. Our focus will be on but not limited to Age, Disability, Race and Sex.
- By 2027, we will undertake research and report back to understand the impact of infrastructure and the relation between inequality. Our focus will be on but not limited to Sex, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment.