

# Aberdeen Equalities Participation Network

## June 2021 – Summary of Follow-up from Lucy McKenzie (ACC Customer Services)

### ACC Website

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#### Issues:

- Difficulties finding the right information on the ACC website.
- Limited BSL provision, also hard to find.
- Many functions require setting up an account when it doesn't seem necessary – this is difficult to remember and off-putting to some.
- Difficulties with the blue badge portal on the website

#### Possible Solutions + Follow-Up:

- Chat bot 'AB1' now available on ACC website – like a message window to ask questions – should help people find what they're looking for more easily. ACC looking to make this available in multiple languages and also use voice recognition.
- ACC currently reviewing where creating an account is required, to ensure that it's only in places where it makes sense (like setting up rent payments).
- ACC currently putting together all the feedback about the website and deciding how to address it – the process should be complete by the end of the year. Lucy will provide an update for a future meeting once completed.
- More BSL videos are being developed, starting with vaccines as a priority then other key services throughout the rest of the year. These can be found on the dedicated BSL page – feedback welcome on this approach: [British Sign Language | Aberdeen City Council](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/british-sign-language) (full URL: [aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/british-sign-language](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/british-sign-language) )
- Blue Badges – there is an option to apply on behalf of someone (with their consent) and a print and post option should customers prefer. Lucy spoke with colleagues and folk were not aware of any ongoing issues – they would welcome more specific detail to explore further, and are happy to provide support.

### Digital Exclusion

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**Issue:** IT skills and equipment have been required to access services, and particular groups (including Africans, older people and disabled people) feel that communities have been left to get on with it themselves, with minimal (or no) support around digital access.

**Follow-Up:** Community Planning has set up a digital literacy group – they are inviting folk to get involved to ensure diverse groups are represented. Please provide contact details to Lucy and she will pass on accordingly.

### Accessibility of Services

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**Issue:** lack of systematic audit or monitoring on the accessibility of services

**Follow-Up:** Currently, ACC website follows established accessibility guidelines – further info: [aberdeencity.gov.uk/accessibility](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/accessibility). Website accessibility audit will start next month – there will be opportunities for EPN to be involved, the project lead will be in touch. No mention of other services.

## Customer Feedback

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### **Issue: Options for feeding back to ACC need to be diversified**

**Follow-Up:** ACC currently working on feedback approaches to ensure a wide reach – Lucy will provide an update for a future meeting. Currently, ACC website contact page has multiple options for providing feedback – calls, texts, BSL, written contact and face to face:

[aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/have-your-say/contact-us](http://aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/have-your-say/contact-us)

## Language Support

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**Issue:** How does ACC ensure a consistent approach to language support across different services?

**Follow-Up:** ACC currently reviewing how language support is provided, including liaising with other organisations to identify best practice – should be complete by the end of the year. Lucy will provide an update for a future meeting.

In the meantime, anyone wishing to access a service has the right to ask for language support and this can be made available. There is provision for phone interpreting, written translations and alternative formats when requested.

## Council Tax Bills

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**Issue:** delays to Council Tax bills being sent out.

**Follow-Up:** ACC has been receiving a high number of Council Tax enquiries, not been able to respond as quickly as they would like. To deal with this, ACC are recruiting new staff and automating / digitising processes where possible to improve efficiency. Lucy will provide an update for a future meeting once the improvement plan is complete.

Lucy followed up on the example given at the meeting and a bill has been sent.

## Housing Officers

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**Issue:** Changing access to housing teams making it challenging to support vulnerable users. A new model has been introduced for handling housing enquiries – a central phone number has replaced individual email addresses, so cases need to be repeatedly explained over the phone.

**Follow-Up:** Lucy contacted Housing related service managers, and they are unsure what this refers to. Additional clarification required please.

## Lack of Community Engagement

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**Issue:** ACC hasn't been reaching some communities when engagement is key, for example during the Covid-19 crisis. It's a particular problem for African communities.

**Follow-Up:** EPN has created the community engagement directory/resource in recent months – this should support better engagement and outreach from council services. No update from Lucy.