Aberdeen Equalities Participation Network
Summary of Follow-up from Lucy McKenzie (ACC Customer Services)
October 2021

ACC Website

General / Accessibility

- ACC website was audited by the Central Digital & Data Office in July. Their recommendations are being implemented to ensure it meets Web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA standards), including colour contrast and ensuring that a keyboard can be used to access all content and functionality of web pages.

- ACC are providing staff with guidelines on best practice and staff are undertaking online training to improve knowledge of accessibility within digital content.

Limited BSL provision.

- A BSL video on applying for a Blue Badge has been posted: youtu.be/eTjfMBzlKeQ

- This is part of the process of adding more BSL videos. Dedicated BSL page: aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/british-sign-language

Difficulties with the blue badge portal.

- A Blue Badge guidance video has been created: youtu.be/133trUtDONw
  Also, a BSL version: youtu.be/eTjfMBzlKeQ
- Web portal has an option to apply on behalf of someone (with their consent) and a print and post option should customers prefer. *(note: unclear where this is located on the website)*
- <mark>Query for EPN:</mark> Are there still specific problems coming up? Lucy's colleagues are not aware of any ongoing issues and would welcome more specific detail to investigate further.

Digital Exclusion

Several groups face digital exclusion: 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.

- Community Planning has set up a digital literacy group – they are inviting folk to get involved to ensure diverse groups are represented.
- <mark>Query for EPN:</mark> Please provide contact details for anyone wishing to be part of the digital literacy group, and Lucy will pass on accordingly.

Lack of systematic audit or monitoring on the accessibility of services.

- The ACC website was audited for accessibility, but there was no mention of other services.

Language Support

- **Previous update:** People have the right to ask for language support, with provision for phone interpreting, written translations and alternative formats when requested.

- **Previous query:** is there any guidance on ACC website (etc) for how to do this? A lot of written materials have a section with information about requesting alternative formats – what's the procedure/protocol for telephone inquiries, for example?

- **Update:** ACC are continuing to identify and consider options to deliver the most effective and accessible service. The website information is currently being reviewed and updated.

Issues with Specific Services

Changing access to housing teams makes 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.

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

Delays to Council Tax bills being sent out.

- ACC are still experiencing a high volume of work and have recruited an additional 5 staff to help deal with the workload. The digitisation and automation of processes is ongoing, and uptake of the online forms launched to date is high. This helps create capacity for the contact centre team to deal with telephone calls from those that are unable to use the online service.

June 2021

ACC Website

General / Accessibility

- **(Jun 2021)** ACC are 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.

Difficulties finding the right information.

- **(Jun 2021)** Chat bot 'AB1' now available – 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.

Many functions require setting up an account when it doesn't seem necessary.

- **(Jun 2021)** 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).

Lack of Community Engagement

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.

- **(No Update in June or October)** EPN has created the community engagement directory/resource – this should support better engagement and outreach from council services.

Language Support

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

- **(Jun 2021)** 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.
- **(Jun 2021)** 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.

Issues with Specific Services

Delays to Council Tax bills being sent out.

- **(Jun 2021)** 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.

- **(Jun 2021)** Lucy followed up on the example given at the meeting and a bill has been sent.