

Report

Report to:	Housing and Technical Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 November 2023
Report by:	Executive Director, Housing and Technical Resources

Subject:	Annual Report – Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within Housing and Technical Resources
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an overview of progress made in relation to mainstreaming equalities within Housing and Technical Resources during 2022/2023; and
- ◆ highlight the key actions to be progressed during 2023/2024

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the progress made during 2022/2023 and key actions for 2023/2024 in relation to mainstreaming equalities, detailed in appendices 1 and 2, be noted

3. Background

- 3.1. The Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group has oversight of progress made in relation to the equality and diversity work plan, supporting a consistent approach to mainstreaming equality and diversity across the Resource.
- 3.2. The range of work being carried out across the Resource, in relation to mainstreaming equality and diversity, is reported on an annual basis, with the last annual report for 2021/2022 presented to Housing and Technical Resources Committee on 14 December 2022.
- 3.3. This report provides details of the activities progressed during 2022/2023 and sets out the key priorities to be progressed during 2023/2024.

4. National and Local Policy Developments

4.1. New Housing Bill for Scotland

On 5 September 2023, the First Minister made a statement to Parliament outlining this year's Programme for Government. The Programme includes a new Housing Bill, to be introduced by the end of the current parliamentary year (2023/2024), which will begin to deliver on specific actions set out in Housing to 2040 and the subsequent draft rented sector strategy, 'A New Deal for Tenants'.

It is intended that the Bill will seek to deliver on a number of key housing-related commitments including:-

- ◆ providing stronger rights for tenants, greater protection from eviction and a national system of rent controls for the private rented sector
- ◆ placing a new requirement for all social landlords to have a domestic abuse policy in place; and
- ◆ introducing a new duty applicable to a range of public bodies which will require them to take specific actions to reduce the risk of homelessness

The Resource will closely monitor developments in relation to the new Housing Bill and ensure a timely and appropriate response to the anticipated new requirements.

4.2. Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Scottish local authorities to set out Equality Outcomes to address human rights and inequalities at 4-yearly intervals. The Council's current Equality Outcomes cover the period 2021 to 2025, with progress against these published at the mid-point interval.

Housing and Technical Resources headline Equality Outcome is 'Prevent homelessness occurring and significantly reduce homelessness', with specific actions identified which align to the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) 2019 to 2024 and the new Local Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027.

To inform the Council's mid-point report on progress of the Equality Outcomes for the 2-year period to the end of March 2023, the Resource updated on various measures under the 'Prevent homelessness occurring and significantly reduce homelessness' outcome. The report detailing progress the Council has made in relation to meeting its equality outcomes and mainstreaming equalities into the organisation, was presented to Executive Committee on 21 June 2023.

The full mainstreaming equalities progress report for the period 2021 to 2023 has been published on the Council's website.

4.3. Equality Impact Assessment and the Fairer Scotland Duty

The Resource continues to undertake Equality Impact and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments against new or revised policies and strategies as a means of mitigating inequalities.

During 2022/2023, the Resource continued to work with the Corporate Equality and Diversity Working Group to develop an integrated approach to Equality Impact Assessment and the Fairer Scotland Duty. The proposed new approach will also consider human rights, children's rights and climate change as part of policy development processes. It is anticipated that the new integrated impact assessment will be implemented during 2023/2024.

5. **Key Areas of Progress 2022/2023**

5.1. Key highlights in relation to mainstreaming equalities for Housing and Technical Resources during 2022/2023 include:-

- ◆ 233 homes were delivered through the Home+ affordable housing supply programme, with a continued focus on ensuring homes are accessible and can meet a variety of current and future needs. Of the new council homes delivered, 47 (27%) were wheelchair accessible, exceeding the 10% target set

- ◆ continued investment in the Council's 2 Gypsy/Traveller sites to ensure delivery of the site masterplans, developed in consultation with site residents. Following installation of the new community facility at the Shawlands Crescent site in 2022, a range of services continues to utilise the facility, with education classes and health clinics taking place on a regular basis alongside a resident run youth club. In addition, the Council worked with the Residents Association to encourage involvement of males from the community in decision-making processes. This led to Scotland's first men's Gypsy/Traveller Group meeting held with the Council and the agenda set by the male residents
- ◆ delivery of year 4 of the RRTP which saw the Resource and its' housing and homelessness partners continue to work together in challenging circumstances to prevent and reduce homelessness and limit the time people experiencing homelessness spend in temporary accommodation. This included continuation of the positive Personal Housing Planning approach for vulnerable groups including women experiencing domestic abuse, care leavers and those leaving prison and the further development of Housing First, with a total of 36 households now supported through the programme
- ◆ continued partnership working with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel and Disability Partnership Housing Sub-Group on the accessibility aspects of key housing policies and strategies, with both groups providing valuable feedback to inform the finalised version of the Local Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027
- ◆ the development of services for sheltered housing tenants including implementing technology enabled care and falls prevention initiatives, supporting digital inclusion for sheltered tenants and the continued implementation of the Chartered Institute of Housing's Housing and Dementia Framework to better support tenants who are living with dementia
- ◆ following the publication of findings of the Independent Care Review in 2020, the Resource has continued to work in partnership with other key agencies, including the South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee and homelessness partners, to modernise the care system and deliver the objectives of 'The Promise Scotland'. The Promise aims to ensure that care experienced children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected with better life chances as they progress into adulthood

5.2. Full details of these areas and other areas of work progressed by the Resource, in relation to mainstreaming equalities during 2022/2023, can be found in Appendix 1.

6. Consultation, Engagement and Customer Feedback

6.1. As part of the Resource's annual consultation programme and in addition to the broader programme of engagement, officers continue to work closely with a range of equalities groups and stakeholders including:-

- ◆ Disability Partnership Housing Sub-Group
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Access Panel
- ◆ residents of the Council's 2 Gypsy/Travellers sites
- ◆ sheltered housing tenants
- ◆ people with lived experience of homelessness
- ◆ care-experienced young people
- ◆ Seniors Together South Lanarkshire

- ◆ Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Autism Strategy Group
- ◆ See Hear Strategic Working Group
- ◆ Financial Inclusion Network Digital Inclusion Sub-Group
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Youth Council
- ◆ Bord-na-Gaidhlig

During 2022/2023, these groups and stakeholders were instrumental in contributing to the development of key strategic areas of work including the review and development of the new Local Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027.

7. Complaints

- 7.1. During 2022/2023, there were no complaints recorded by the Resource under the Equalities category.

8. Employee Learning and Development

- 8.1. Across the Resource, 598 employees participated in equality and diversity related learning and development activities during 2022/2023 including:-

- ◆ Equality and Diversity Awareness
- ◆ Unconscious Bias
- ◆ Marriage and Civil Partnership
- ◆ Race Discrimination
- ◆ Age Discrimination
- ◆ Communicating with people who are deaf
- ◆ Disability Module
- ◆ Forced Marriage
- ◆ Transgender awareness

This programme of equalities training will continue to be rolled out by Employee Development on an ongoing basis. Specific training for Housing and Technical Resources staff will also be identified by the Resource and delivered as required.

9. Equality and Diversity Reporting Framework

- 9.1. On an annual basis, the Resource reports the range of work and activities being progressed to support mainstreaming equality to key groups/stakeholders including:-

- ◆ Resource Management Team
- ◆ Parent Joint Consultative Council
- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Committee
- ◆ Equal Opportunities Forum

10. Key Priorities for 2023/2024

- 10.1. The Resource Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group will continue to oversee the work in relation to mainstreaming equality across Housing and Technical Resources during 2023/2024.

- 10.2. Key priorities for the Resource during 2023/2024 will include:-

- ◆ ensuring that the new IT system is developed to appropriately collect and report equalities information

- ◆ tracking progress of the new Human Rights Bill scheduled to be brought to the Scottish Parliament before the end of the current parliamentary session 2021 to 2026, ensuring appropriate consideration of implications for the Resource
- ◆ responding to local and national developments by reviewing housing policies and strategies, with a specific focus on equalities and human rights, to ensure they continue to meet current and future priority objectives
- ◆ continuing to deliver a range of housing solutions to meet a wide variety of needs
- ◆ delivering year 5 of the RRTP to mitigate homelessness and respond to the challenges of an ongoing changing environment
- ◆ continuing to support the programmes of refugee resettlement and asylum dispersal within South Lanarkshire

10.3. Full details of key priorities to be taken forward during 2023/2024 are detailed in Appendix 2.

11. Next Steps

11.1. During 2023/2024, in line with the agreed reporting schedule, an annual update will be reported to the groups/stakeholders detailed at 9.1 above.

12. Employee Implications

12.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.

13. Financial Implications

13.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

14. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

14.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy which impacts on the natural environment, climate change or sustainability.

15. Other Implications

15.1. There is a risk to South Lanarkshire Council should the Resource not comply with the relevant equalities' duty and legislation.

16. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

16.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore no impact assessment or formal consultation is required.

Stephen Gibson

Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

10 October 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ We will work to put people first and reduce inequality
- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

- ◆ Our children and young people thrive
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ People live the healthiest lives possible

Previous References

- ◆ Annual Report - Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within Housing and Technical Resources, Housing and Technical Resources Committee, 14 December 2022
- ◆ Executive Committee - 21 June 2023

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Housing to 2040 (The Scottish Government – March 2021)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Equality Outcomes 2021 to 2025
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Local Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 to 2024

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: -

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APPENDIX 1

KEY AREAS OF PROGRESS 2022/23
Home+ Affordable Housing Supply Programme
<p>During 2022/23, a total of 233 additional affordable homes for social rent were delivered by the council. This included 176 new build homes and 57 properties bought through the council's Open Market Purchase scheme. In delivering the new build housing programme, the Resource delivered 47 wheelchair accessible homes, which accounted for 27% of all new build homes delivered, exceeding the 10% target set within the Local Housing Strategy 2022-27.</p>
Adaptations Programme
<p>During 2022/23, a total of 1,924 homes were adapted to support people with health conditions or disabilities to continue to live independently within their own homes, without the need for rehousing or moving to a care setting. The Resource completed 1,266 adaptations to council properties and a further 658 adaptations were completed in private homes through grant funding provided through the Scheme of Assistance.</p> <p>This represents a 27% increase in the total number of homes adapted when compared with 2021/22.</p>
Accessibility
<p>During 2022/23, the Resource continued to work in partnership with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel and Disability Partnership Housing Sub-Group. A key aspect of this was working in consultation with both groups on the accessibility aspects of key housing policies and strategies, with both groups providing valuable feedback to inform the finalised version of the Local Housing Strategy 2022-27.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment and the Fairer Scotland Duty
<p>During 2022/23, the Resource continued to undertake Equality Impact and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments for new and revised policies and strategies as a means of mitigating inequalities.</p>
Housing and Homelessness
<p>The fourth annual review of the RRTP was undertaken during 2022/23 and was reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee in August 2023. The review highlighted the changing environment in which partners operate, not least the spike in homelessness which has occurred nationally and locally, the cost-of-living crisis and wider increasing demand and pressures in the housing system, including from humanitarian programmes. Despite these challenges, the review noted that significant progress had been made in the fourth year of the plan with key highlights including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the continued strong focus on partnership working to deliver homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment services;• close partnership working to develop and progress specific 'Directions' within the Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022-25. Progress made over last year includes positive partnership with the Community Links health team and an information sharing arrangement with the National Health Service enabling data trend analysis to understand links between health and homelessness data with a view to aiding preventative activity;

- a continued focus on early detection of housing risk factors and interventions to prevent homelessness where possible through the Integrated Housing Options model. Despite an increase in the demand for the service, 65% of advice cases were closed with support being provided preventing homelessness from occurring;
- a 65% reduction in long term homelessness from 120 in 2019/20, 56 in 2020/21, 42 in 2021/22 and 40 in 2022/23;
- an increase in the number of temporary tenancies which were 'flipped' to a Scottish Secure Tenancy, providing the homeless household with a permanent home, and avoiding the need for the disruption of further moves. A total of 105 tenancies have been flipped since 2019/20;
- the further development of Housing First, with a total of 36 households now supported through the programme;
- The continuation of the positive Personal Housing Planning approach for vulnerable groups including women experiencing domestic abuse, care leavers and people leaving prison.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

Since December 2015 to the end of March 2023, 59 families (210 individuals) have been settled across South Lanarkshire through the UK Refugee and Afghan resettlement programmes supported by specialist Support Officers from the Refugee Resettlement Team.

Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in March 2022, over 800 individuals have been supported in four hotels in South Lanarkshire as part of the Scottish Government's Super Sponsor Scheme. The Refugee Resettlement Team also resettled 79 families (203 individuals) in communities across South Lanarkshire and over 215 guests have been welcomed by 120 hosts through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. A further 160 individuals have been supported in interim accommodation as a move on option from hotel provision.

The Resettlement Team continues to work closely with Youth, Family and Community Learning Officers (ESOL) within Education Resources, enabling individuals to access opportunities, positively engage with employers, communities and develop English language skills.

Asylum Dispersal

During 2022/23, the Resource worked with a range of internal and external partners to support the implementation of the UK Government's programme to widen dispersal of asylum seekers. This work included ensuring the council is represented at national meetings and contributes effectively to ongoing discussions and liaison with the UK Government's Asylum Accommodation and Support Provider and other agencies, in the identification of suitable accommodation options within South Lanarkshire.

Gypsy/Travellers

Throughout 2022/23, the Resource has continued to ensure the appropriate provision of services provided to residents of South Lanarkshire Council's two Gypsy/Traveller sites.

This includes the latest phase of the resident-led site masterplans, delivering projects prioritised by residents to make significant improvements to accommodation and communal facilities on both sites. In 2022/23, investment of over £1.2million from both the council's Housing Revenue Account and Scottish Government has resulted in the successful delivery of extended amenity units, providing additional living space and upgraded utilities, including street lighting and sewage systems.

Following on from the installation of the new resident managed community facility at the Shawlands Crescent site in 2022, services continue to utilise the community facility, with education classes and health clinics taking place on a regular basis alongside the resident run youth club. New outdoor seating areas have been installed to provide additional meeting and social spaces.

In addition, the council has worked with the Residents Association to encourage the involvement of male residents in decision-making processes. This has led to Scotland's first men's Gypsy/Traveller group meeting held with the council and with the agenda set by the male residents.

Sheltered Housing Tenants

During 2022/23, the Resource continued to support digital inclusion for sheltered tenants, with a further 14 digital devices with data supplied for communal tenant use following a successful funding bid. To augment this work, six volunteer Digital Champions were recruited from within existing sheltered housing staff to provide ongoing digital support and promote connectivity for tenants.

The sheltered housing service also worked in partnership with a NHSL Older People's Consultant to promote anticipatory care modelling and falls prevention initiatives for sheltered tenants.

Support to Care Experienced Children and Young People

To support the objectives of The Promise, during 2022/23 the Resource worked in partnership to implement a number of initiatives to prevent where possible, children and young people entering the care system, and to better support children and young people experiencing care. This included:

- Breaking the Cycle team continuing to support families with children to sustain tenancies, maximise opportunities in relation to income and support networks and providing advice and assistance to young carers.
- Introduction of the Wellbeing Web recording and monitoring housing support tool which measures positive steps taken by young people through the provision of support services.
- Undertaking a review of the Throughcare joint protocol which will be implemented in 2023/24.

Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse

The Resource has a well-established person-centred housing pathway approach for people experiencing domestic abuse. The pathway considers options to support victims that can include agency support and safety planning to remain in their current accommodation or provision of housing advice, should they wish to move to a different location.

During 2022/23, a total of 17 victims were supported through housing pathways.

South Lanarkshire Autism Strategy

During 2022/23, the Resource worked in partnership with the council's Autism Strategy Group to support delivery of the South Lanarkshire Autism Action Plan to help improve services for children and adults who have autism.

This work assisted the Resource to better understand the housing and support needs of people with autism and to tailor services appropriately. This included assisting service users with autism to secure more suitable and sustainable housing.

Digital Inclusion

During 2022/23 and building on the earlier success of Connecting Scotland, a successful bid was made to the Lintel Trust's Community Benefit Fund, which enabled a further 14 digital devices with data to be supplied for use within sheltered housing communal spaces.

The sheltered housing service is supported by six Digital Champions who work with tenants to enhance skills, maximise digital capacity and facilitate access to online services.

Translation and Interpretation Services

The Resource continues to provide a range of translation (written) and interpretation (verbal) services to customers with specific communication requirements, including sign language provision. These services have helped to make housing services more inclusive for people whose first language is not English.

Specifically, during 2022/23, the Resource provided the sheltered housing newsletter in audio format for tenants who are blind or visually impaired.

Gaelic Language Plan

During 2022/23, the Resource supported delivery of the council's Gaelic Language Plan by publishing the Executive Summary of the 2022-27 Local Housing Strategy in Gaelic.

APPENDIX 2

KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2023/24
Home+ Affordable Housing Supply Programme
Continue to implement the Home+ affordable housing supply programme, to support the delivery of additional and affordable homes, whilst delivering the revised target of 10% for fully wheelchair accessible homes.
Adaptations Programme
Continue to implement the adaptations programme in both council and private homes to support independent living for older people and those with disabilities.
Accessibility
<p>Continue to work in partnership with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel and Disability Partnership Housing Sub-Group to ensure that council homes and public buildings remain accessible to meet a variety of needs.</p> <p>During 2023/24, both groups will undertake a visit to the mixed tenure housing development at Wellhall Road, Hamilton to review accessibility standards.</p>
New Housing Bill
Consider implications and respond to requirements arising from the publication of the new Housing Bill, expected to be published in late 2023.
Human Rights Bill for Scotland
Monitor progress of and contribute to consultation to inform the development of the Human Rights Bill for Scotland. The Bill is expected to be brought to the Scottish Parliament before the end of the current parliamentary session 2021-26.
Equality Impact Assessment and the Fairer Scotland Duty
Continue to implement Equality Impact and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments to new and revised policies and strategies, whilst continuing to work with the Corporate Equalities group to develop the integrated impact assessment due for implementation during 2023/24.
Consultation and Engagement
Continue the programme of consultation and engagement with a range of equality groups to help shape housing services and practice and ensure that they remain inclusive for everyone.
Learning and Development
Continue to provide equalities-based learning and development opportunities for employees and to reflect current priorities.
Housing and Homelessness
Delivery of year five of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
Refugee Resettlement Programme
Continue to contribute to the UK Refugee Resettlement Programme and support the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Asylum Dispersal
Working in partnership, support the implementation of the dispersal in South Lanarkshire.
Gypsy/Travellers
Continue to engage with Gypsy / Travellers to deliver the 2023/24 site masterplan priorities including the extension of the remaining amenity units, landscaping enhancements and two new play areas designed by children currently living on the sites.
Sheltered Housing Tenants
Continue to take forward a range of initiatives to improve services and support independent living for sheltered tenants.
Support to Care Experienced Children and Young People
Continue to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver the aims and objectives of 'The Promise', including implementation of the revised Throughcare joint protocol, to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
South Lanarkshire Autism Strategy
Working in partnership with the Autism Resources Co-ordination Hub, deliver bespoke autism awareness-raising sessions to Housing and Property Services staff.
Equality Data Collection
Implement an effective approach to equality data collection, linking to and supporting the development of the new integrated Housing and Property Services management system.
Translation and Interpretation
Continue to make housing services more accessible for people whose first language is not English by providing translation and interpretation services.