

# Report

Report to:	<b>Equal Opportunities Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>21 September 2022</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director, Housing and Technical Resources</b>

Subject:	<b>Annual Report - Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within Housing and Technical Resources</b>
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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 2021/2022
- ◆ highlight the key actions being progressed during 2022/2023

## 2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the progress made during 2021/2022, and key actions for 2022/2023 in relation to mainstreaming equalities, be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. The Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group have responsibility for ensuring progress is made in relation to the Equality and Diversity work plan and support a consistent approach to mainstreaming equality and diversity across the Resource
- 3.2. On an annual basis a report is developed highlighting the range of work being carried out across the Resource in relation to mainstreaming equality and diversity. The last annual report, covering the period 2020/2021, was presented to the Equal Opportunities Forum on 31 March 2021.
- 3.3. Over the course of the last two and a half years it has been widely recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact upon vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups within communities. While restrictions have eased, work across the Resource to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on potentially vulnerable customer groups has remained a particular focus of attention during 2021/2022.
- 3.4. This report provides further details of this work alongside other activities progressed during 2021/2022, whilst setting out the key priorities to be progressed during 2022/2023.

#### **4. National and Local Policy Developments**

##### **4.1. A New Deal for Tenants - Draft Rented Sector Strategy**

In December 2021, the Scottish Government launched the consultative draft Strategy, 'A New Deal for Tenants' which aims to help deliver the Housing to 2040 vision. The Strategy aims to ensure that all tenants can access secure, stable tenancies, with affordable choices, whilst also benefiting from good quality homes and professional levels of service and rights. In equality terms, the vision of the rented sector strategy is to contribute to tackling child poverty, fuel poverty and ending homelessness, whilst better understanding the protected characteristics of people to provide equality of outcomes in the rented sector.

In April 2022, the Resource provided its response on the consultation to the Scottish Government. The response was broadly supportive of the vision and principles set out within the draft Strategy and welcomed the opportunity to have further discussion once detailed proposals have been developed. The final Strategy is expected to be published by the end of 2022, with legislation to be brought forward during 2023.

##### **4.2. Review of Public Sector Equality Duty**

In December 2021, the Scottish Government published a consultation on the 'Review of the Operation of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in Scotland'. The Public Sector Equality Duty emanates from the Equality Act 2010, with Scottish Specific Duties introduced in 2012.

The Scottish Specific Duties outline the key responsibilities for public bodies and include statutory requirements to report against Equality Outcomes and to continue to evidence that decisions relating to policy and practice are properly assessed against the general duties.

The Resource contributed to the development of the Council's response to the consultation, which was submitted in March 2022. The Scottish Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission are currently reviewing the Scottish Specific Duties with a view to revising these for 2025, in time for the next Mainstreaming Equalities reports.

##### **4.3. Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022 to 2025**

During 2021/2022, the Resource worked with colleagues from the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop the new Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022 to 2025. This saw a range of actions identified to support 2 strategic housing priorities:-

- ◆ suitable and sustainable housing
- ◆ preventing and reducing homelessness

Broadly defined, the housing actions identified aim to widen access to housing options, support older and disabled people to live independently at home for longer and prevent homelessness and its impact by improving access to health and support services, especially for those with complex needs. Progress against the actions will be monitored against identified performance measures.

##### **4.4. Equality Outcomes**

In 2020/2021, the Resource identified the headline Equality Outcome '*Prevent homelessness occurring and significantly reduce homelessness*' for the period 2021-25, with specific actions identified which align to the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP). These actions are monitored and reported on as part of the RRTP Annual Review process (further details provided at 5.3). It is anticipated that an

update on progress in relation to the Equality Outcomes will be reported to the Scottish Government in 2023.

4.5. 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 2021/2022, 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 2022/2023.

**5. Key Areas of Progress 2021/2022**

5.1. Home+ Affordable Housing Supply Programme

During 2021/2022, a total of 657 additional affordable homes for social rent were delivered across South Lanarkshire. This included 468 additional homes delivered by the Council and 189 new build homes built by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). In delivering the new build housing programme, the Resource exceeded the 8% target identified for the delivery of fully wheelchair accessible homes during 2021/2022.

5.2. Adaptations Programme

During 2021/2022, a total of 1,514 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 993 adaptations to council properties and a further 521 adaptations were completed in private homes through grant funding provided through the Scheme of Assistance.

5.3. Housing and Homelessness

Through the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP), the Resource and its housing and homelessness partners continue to take forward a range of actions to prevent and reduce homelessness and limit the time people experiencing homelessness spend in temporary accommodation.

The third annual review of the RRTP was undertaken during 2021/2022 and reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee on 10 August 2022. The review noted that significant progress had been made in the third year of the plan. Key highlights include:-

- ◆ the continued strong focus on partnership working to deliver homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment services
- ◆ the further development of Housing First, with a total of 33 households now supported through the programme
- ◆ the continuation of positive Personal Housing Planning approach for vulnerable groups including women experiencing domestic abuse, care leavers, and those leaving prison

5.4. Technology Enabled Care Programme

During 2021/2022, the Resource continued to progress a range of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) initiatives to support independent living for older people, those with disabilities and other vulnerable customers. This work also supports the digital

inclusion agenda which was brought into sharp focus during the pandemic. Some examples of the work undertaken in the year includes:-

- ◆ the delivery of 20 TEC enabled council homes at the Blantyre Life Facility
- ◆ 176 digital devices with data have been supplied to vulnerable tenants and other customers through successful bids to Connecting Scotland, the Lintel Trust and the 'Bringing IT Home' project
- ◆ installation of wi-fi at both council-owned Gypsy/Traveller sites
- ◆ utilising Turning Point Scotland's out of hours crisis response service Digital Harm Reduction Toolkit with homeless service users
- ◆ Truecall call blockers and video doorbells installed for sheltered tenants and other vulnerable customers by Trading Standards
- ◆ use of the NHS 'Near Me' video consulting service is being promoted across homelessness and sheltered housing services to facilitate virtual face-to-face medical appointments for service users
- ◆ joint working with IT and Social Work Occupational Therapy services to test telecare solutions for sheltered housing tenants

To augment the work that is ongoing around TEC, during 2021/2022, the Resource also completed sign-up to the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's TEC in Housing Charter. This provides an opportunity to join a network of housing providers to share good practice and explore new innovations.

#### 5.5. Housing and Dementia

During 2021/2022, the Resource commenced implementation of the Chartered Institute of Housing's Housing and Dementia Framework. This aims to better support tenants who are living with dementia to lead full and independent lives for as long as possible, within the comfort of their own home.

An initial self-assessment of the sheltered housing service was undertaken and an action plan has been developed to take forward a number of improvements. This aims to ensure that people living with dementia are provided with the right advice, the right home and the right support.

#### 5.6. Refugee Resettlement Programme

As at the end of March 2022, 56 families (202 individuals) have been settled across South Lanarkshire, with over half being children under 16 years old. These families have come to the UK through the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme and the new UK Resettlement Programme and are supported by specialist Support Officers from the Refugee Resettlement Team. The Refugee Resettlement Team work closely with four Youth, Family and Community Learning Officers (ESOL), within Education Resources, enabling individuals to access opportunities, positively engage with communities and develop English language skills.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the UK Government announced a 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme to assist Ukrainian nationals displaced by the war to apply for a visa to live in the UK. The Council and its partners will have a pivotal role to play in helping to support Ukrainian nationals, for example, by providing accommodation, conducting property and safeguarding checks, providing a range of practical support and assistance and managing health and wellbeing. This will help support the implementation of the scheme and the associated Scottish Super Sponsor scheme during the year ahead.

#### 5.7. Gypsy / Travellers

During 2021/2022, the Resource continued to work closely with residents of its 2 Gypsy/Traveller sites to improve both accommodation and site provision. A range of improvement projects were progressed in line with site investment masterplans previously developed in conjunction with residents. These included:-

- ◆ the installation of a new community facility and events space at Shawlands Crescent, designed and managed by residents
- ◆ the extension and reconfiguration of pitches across both sites to meet fire safety guidance and provide residents with more space to allow larger accommodation options
- ◆ a range of upgrades to the amenity units at both sites, including the installation of new decarbonised heating, insulation, doors, windows and roofs
- ◆ the installation of free to access Wi-Fi at both sites for residents to help overcome social isolation and digital accessibility issues commonly observed within the Gypsy / Traveller community

The Resource's engagement activity and collaborative approach with Gypsy/Traveller residents has recently received recognition at a national level, with the council winning awards from both COSLA and the UK Municipal Journal.

#### 5.8. Equality Data Collection and Knowing Our Customers

During 2021/2022, the Resource provided an update to the Scottish Housing Regulator, through the Annual Assurance Statement, confirming that plans were being developed to review and adjust the existing approach to the collection of equalities and human rights information to support new regulatory requirements.

A Resource working group was established to consider actions to improve the efficacy and level of equalities monitoring information held for customers. An action plan has been developed, prioritising key areas to be progressed in conjunction with the development of the new Integrated Housing and Property Management System. This work will be a key priority area for the Resource Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating group in 2022/2023 and will ensure that the specific needs of customers are being met.

#### 5.9. Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse

During 2021/2022, the Resource implemented a 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 provide housing advice, should they wish to move to different location.

A total of 19 housing pathways were completed for people experiencing domestic abuse during 2021/2022.

#### 5.10. 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.

#### 5.11. Consultation, engagement and customer feedback

As part of the Resource's annual consultation programme and in addition to the broader programme of engagement, officers continued 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 two Gypsy/Travellers sites
- ◆ Seniors Together
- ◆ Sheltered housing tenants
- ◆ People with lived experience of homelessness
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Partnership
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Autism Strategy Group
- ◆ Financial Inclusion Network Digital Inclusion Sub-group
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Youth Council
- ◆ Bord-na-Gaidhlig

During 2021/2022, these groups and stakeholders were instrumental in contributing to the development of key strategic pieces of work, including the review of the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

#### 5.12. Complaints

There were no complaints recorded within the Equalities category during 2021/2022.

#### 5.13. Employee Learning and Development

Resource employees participated in a wide range of equality and diversity related e-learning activities during 2021/2022. This included a core set of mandatory training modules for all employees which included:-

- ◆ Equality and Diversity Awareness (completed by 749 employees)
- ◆ Unconscious Bias (completed by 473 employees)
- ◆ Marriage and Civil Partnership (completed by 463 employees)
- ◆ Race Discrimination (completed by 728 employees)

This programme of equalities training will continue to be rolled out by Employee Development on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the Resource also delivered Training/awareness sessions on the following topics:-

- ◆ British Sign Language training at an appropriate level for employees to support customers with a hearing impairment
- ◆ In July 2021, guidance in relation to Equality Impact Assessment and the Fairer Scotland Duty was delivered to appropriate housing staff as part of a service development session. This aimed to ensure that these processes continue to be considered in all new or revised strategic pieces of work
- ◆ In December 2021, a service development session on the Housing and Dementia Framework was delivered all housing operational staff to raise awareness of the Framework. This included information and advice on the Herbert Protocol, a tool which provides vital information to the police about vulnerable people who may have gone missing.

#### 5.14. Equality and Diversity Reporting Framework

On an annual basis, the Resource reports the range of work and activities being progressed to support mainstreaming equality to the following key stakeholders:-

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

## **6. Key Priorities for 2022/2023**

6.1. The Resource Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group (EDCG) will continue to oversee the work in relation to mainstreaming equality across Housing and Technical Resources during 2022/2023.

6.2. Key priorities for 2022/2023 include:-

- ◆ continue to implement equality and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments to new and revised policies and strategies, whilst contributing to development of the new integrated approach
- ◆ continue to implement, monitor and report on progress in relation to the Equality Outcomes for 2021 to 2025, linking to the implementation of Year 4 of the RRTF
- ◆ take forward priority actions identified to improve equalities monitoring information held for customers to help better understand and meet their needs
- ◆ continue to implement the Home+ affordable housing supply programme, to support the delivery of additional and affordable homes
- ◆ continue to implement the adaptations programme to support independent living for older people and those with disabilities
- ◆ continue to explore and deliver new innovations around Technology Enabled Care and digital inclusion to support health and wellbeing for vulnerable customers
- ◆ continue to contribute to the UK Refugee Resettlement Programme and support the Homes for Ukraine scheme
- ◆ take forward actions in support of the introduction of the UK Government's new system for asylum dispersal
- ◆ consider implications and respond to requirements arising from the finalised Rented Sector Strategy due to be published by the Scottish Government in late 2022
- ◆ continue to implement the Housing and Dementia framework to support customers living with dementia to maintain their independence for as long as possible
- ◆ continue to engage with Gypsy/Traveller site residents to inform and shape the programme of investment which continues to be delivered at both sites
- ◆ continue to make Housing Services more accessible for people whose first language is not English by providing translation and interpretation services
- ◆ continue a programme of consultation and engagement with a range of equality groups to help shape housing services and practice
- ◆ continue to provide equalities-based learning and development opportunities for employees and Elected Members to reflect current priorities
- ◆ consider any implications for the Resource arising from the Scottish Government's revised Public Sector Equality Duty, when published
- ◆ support the implementation of the council's Gaelic Language Plan

## **7. Next steps**

7.1. During 2022/2023, in line with the agreed reporting schedule, an annual update will be reported to the groups/stakeholders detailed at 5.14 above.

## **8. Employee Implications**

- 8.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **10. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

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

## **11. Other Implications**

- 11.1. There is a risk to South Lanarkshire Council should the Resource not comply with the relevant equalities duty and legislation.
- 11.2. The content of this report will contribute to the evidence to support the requirements of the Annual Assurance Statement.

## **12. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 12.1. 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.

**Daniel Lowe**

**Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)**

1 September 2022

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

## **Previous References**

- ◆ Report to Equal Opportunities Forum - Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within Housing and Technical Resources (31 March 2021)

## **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies (The Scottish Government – October 2021)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Equality Outcomes 2021 to 2025
- ◆ 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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