

Report

Report to:	Housing and Technical Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 February 2021
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 2019/2020
- ◆ highlight the key actions being progressed during 2020/2021

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the progress made during 2019/2020, and key actions for 2020/2021 in relation to mainstreaming equalities, be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The last annual report was presented to Committee in November 2019, reported on progress made in 2018/2019, and set out a number of actions to be progressed in 2019/2020.
- 3.2. The Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group continue to progress the Equality and Diversity work plan and support a consistent approach to mainstreaming equality and diversity across the Resource.
- 3.3. This report outlines the progress made in meeting these commitments during 2019/2020, whilst setting out the key priorities progressed during 2020/2021.
- 3.4. It has been widely noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and communities. While the Resource has revised service delivery arrangements to support all customer groups, work to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on potentially vulnerable individuals and groups has been a particular focus of attention during 2020/2021. Section 5 of this report provides further details of this work, alongside other activities progressed during the year.

4. Key areas of progress 2019/2020

4.1. Equality Impact Assessments

- 4.1.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) assess the impact of new or revised policies, practices or services against the requirements of the public sector equality duty and help to ensure the needs of people are taken into account during their development and implementation.

4.1.2 During 2019/2020 the Resource completed a total of 11 EQIAs in respect of:-

- ◆ 7 Local Letting Initiatives
- ◆ establishment of a target for Wheelchair Accessible Housing Targets
- ◆ the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2019-23
- ◆ the Gypsy/Traveller Pitch Allocation Policy
- ◆ the Rent Management Policy

4.2. **Home+ new build housing programme**

4.2.1 During 2019/2020, a total of 284 additional affordable homes for social rent were delivered across South Lanarkshire. This included 206 new homes built by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and 78 additional homes delivered by the Council. The new build properties delivered by the Council provided accessible, adaptable new homes suitable for a variety of needs.

4.3. **Adaptations programme**

4.3.1 In total, 1648 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 848 adaptations to Council properties throughout 2019/2020 and a further 800 adaptations were completed in private homes through grant funding provided by the Scheme of Assistance.

4.4. **Wheelchair accessible housing targets**

4.4.1 In September 2019, the Scottish Government published revised Local Housing Strategy guidance which reinforced the requirement for local authorities to set targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing. In South Lanarkshire, a target of 8% has been set for new build homes to be fully wheelchair accessible and meet the 'Housing for Varying Need' standard. Progress against this target will be monitored via the Local Housing Strategy annual review process.

4.5. **South Lanarkshire Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019-22**

4.5.1 The Resource continues to work with partners from across the South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership to contribute to the delivery of South Lanarkshire's second Strategic Commissioning Plan, covering the period 2019 to 2022. This includes the provision of suitable and sustainable housing to support independent living.

4.5.2 The Resource and the Health and Social Care Partnership have also worked together to develop and introduce specific 'Directions' within the Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019 to 22. These aim to promote homelessness routine enquiry across frontline health services and prioritise access to services for homeless households. This is being progressed as a priority in 2020/2021.

4.6. **South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 to 2024**

4.6.1 As reported in 2018/2019, the Resource worked with its housing and homelessness partners from across South Lanarkshire to develop the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) 2019-24. The RRTP contains five high level priority objectives which centre around a partnership approach to preventing and reducing homelessness and limiting the amount of time people experiencing homelessness spend in temporary accommodation.

4.6.2 The first annual review of the RRTP was undertaken during 2019/2020 and reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee on 16 September 2020. The review noted that excellent progress had been made in the first year of the plan by housing, health and homelessness services across South Lanarkshire. A summary of key areas of progress is detailed below:-

- ◆ 34% reduction in the number of homeless households waiting for housing for more than a year
- ◆ 6% reduction in the number of homeless households containing children under 16 years of age
- ◆ 36% reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast as emergency accommodation
- ◆ growth of the Housing First model with a total of 10 individuals having been supported
- ◆ 26 households in temporary accommodation properties were converted to a permanent Scottish Secure Tenancy
- ◆ further development of a Personal Housing Planning approach for vulnerable groups including those experiencing domestic abuse and young care leavers

4.7. **Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme**

4.7.1 As at the end March 2020 there were 50 Syrian families (183 individuals) settled across South Lanarkshire with over half being children under 16 years old. The families are supported by specialist officers from the Refugee Resettlement Team within Housing and Technical Resources, who work closely with 4 Youth, Family and Community Learning Officers (ESOL) within Education Resources, enabling individuals to access opportunities, positively engage with communities and develop English language skills.

4.7.2 On 29 January 2020, the Executive Committee approved the introduction of the UK Global Refugee Programme (GRP) with April 2020 indicated as the proposed starting period. This Programme replaced a range of initiatives including the Syrian Resettlement Programme. It was agreed that South Lanarkshire would resettle approximately 30 individuals during the first year of the new Global Programme. Due to COVID-19 the commencement date of the new Global Programme has still to be confirmed.

4.7.3 In January 2020 the Refugee Resettlement Team won the Council's customer service award, having been nominated by Syrian families who wanted the commitment and support provided by the team to be recognised.

4.7.4 2019/2020 was due to be the final year of the five year Syrian Resettlement Programme, however due to Covid-19 the final families did not arrive during March 2020, which has resulted in the programme continuing into 2020/21.

4.8. **Gypsy/Travellers**

4.8.1 During 2019/2020, in consultation with site residents and other stakeholders, the Resource undertook a review of the Gypsy/Traveller Pitch Allocation Policy. The revised policy, which aims to ensure that those in most need of a pitch are prioritised, was approved by Housing and Technical Resources Committee in February 2020 and came into effect on 1 April 2020.

4.8.2 Investment master plans for both Council Gypsy/Traveller sites have been developed in consultation with site residents and include a range of improvements being delivered in the areas of fire safety, security, energy efficiency and pitch

expansion. Funding for this has been secured through the Council's Capital Programme, the Scottish Government's Additional Capital Fund and Decarbonisation Fund. There have also been successful bids to the Lintel Trust for additional funds which have been utilised for site improvement work and digital inclusion.

- 4.8.3 To augment existing arrangements for consultation and engagement with site residents at both Gypsy/Traveller sites, newsletters were developed and introduced during 2019/2020. Newsletters are produced at regular intervals to keep residents informed about matters which affect them, whilst also seeking their views on issues such as site investment and digital connectivity.

4.9. **Translation and Interpretation Services**

- 4.9.1 The Resource continues to provide a range of translation (written) and interpretation (verbal) services to customers with specific communication requirements, including sign language provision.

- 4.9.2 These services have facilitated the inclusion of people with hearing impairments in a range of housing meetings and events, as well as helping to make housing services more inclusive for people whose first language is not English.

4.10. **Consultation, engagement and customer feedback**

- 4.10.1 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
- ◆ Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (LEMAG)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Youth Council
- ◆ Women's Aid

- 4.10.2 During 2019/2020, these groups and stakeholders were instrumental in shaping the development of key strategic pieces of work, such as the annual budget and rent setting process, and the review of the Rent Management and Gypsy/Traveller Pitch Allocation Policies.

4.11. **Complaints**

- 4.11.1 There were no complaints recorded within the Equalities category during 2019/2020.

4.12. **Employee Training and Development**

- 4.12.1 Resource employees participated in a wide range of equality and diversity related training activities during 2019/2020. These consisted of a mix of one-off events, classroom-based training, and on-line learning activities including:-

- ◆ Gypsy/Traveller Culture Awareness Sessions
- ◆ Show Racism the Red Card
- ◆ Harmful Practices: Forced Marriage, FGM and Honour-Based Violence
- ◆ Co-creating an Autism Positive South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Deaf Awareness

- ◆ Sight Loss Awareness
- ◆ Transgender Awareness
- ◆ LGBT People and Public Services
- ◆ British Sign Language Levels 1 and 2 and Refresher training

4.13. Equality and Diversity Reporting Framework

4.13.1 The Resource continues to report the range of work and activities being progressed to support mainstreaming equality to a number of groups/stakeholders including:-

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

5. Key Priorities for 2020/2021

5.1. The Resource Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group (EDCG) continues to oversee the work in relation to mainstreaming equality across Housing and Technical Resources during 2020/2021.

5.2. As noted previously, while COVID-19 has had a significant impact on society in general, it is widely recognised that there is a disproportionate impact on individuals who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. The impact of COVID-19 is a key focus for the EDCG workplan, to ensure the delivery of housing services to help mitigate negative equality impacts experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.3. Key priorities for 2020/2021 include:-

- ◆ ensuring continuity of critical services to potentially vulnerable individuals and groups including sheltered housing tenants, customers experiencing homelessness and residents of the Council's two Gypsy/Traveller sites
- ◆ continuing to implement equality impact assessments across all new and revised policies and strategies
- ◆ continuing to implement the Home+ new build housing programme to support the delivery of additional and affordable homes
- ◆ continuing to work with the Health and Social Care Partnership to support the objectives of the Housing Contribution Statement
- ◆ engaging with those who have lived experience of homelessness to support the implementation of year 2 of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
- ◆ engaging with Gypsy/Traveller site residents to inform and shape the programme of investment which continues to be delivered at both sites
- ◆ contributing to the UK Global Resettlement Programme for refugees through the consolidation of earlier schemes into a single global programme

6. Next steps

6.1. During 2020/2021, in line with the agreed reporting schedule, an annual update will be reported to the groups/stakeholders detailed at 4.13.1.

7. Employee Implications

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

8. Financial Implications

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

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

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

10. Other Implications

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

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 11.1. 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)

21 January 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Get it right for children and young people
- ◆ Improve health, care and wellbeing
- ◆ Make communities safer, stronger and sustainable
- ◆ Improve later life
- ◆ Improving the availability, quality and access of housing
- ◆ Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ◆ Deliver better health and social care outcomes for all
- ◆ Support our communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration

Previous References

- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources, 13 November 2019

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Local Housing Strategy Guidance (Scottish Government – September 2019)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019-22
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Gypsy/Traveller Pitch Allocation Policy, April 2020

Contact for Further Information

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

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