



# Community Planning Aberdeen

<b>Progress Report</b>	Project End Report: 1.4 “Increase support for those who have been most disadvantaged through the pandemic by 2023”
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Martin Murchie, Chair of Anti-Poverty Outcome Improvement Group
<b>Report Author</b>	Dave Black (shmu) and Maria Jose Pavez Larrea (GREC)
<b>Date of Report</b>	13 September 2023
<b>Governance Group</b>	CPA Board – 29 February 2024

## Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 1.4 which sought to “Increase support for those who have been most disadvantaged through the pandemic by 2023” and seeks approval to end the project as the aim has been achieved.

## Summary of Key Information

### 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic and associated pandemics shone a spotlight on, and exacerbated, inequalities within Scottish society. The disproportionate impact on a range of groups, including women, ethnic minority communities, disabled people, those facing socio-economic disadvantage, younger and older people, was evidenced with an array of data in the Scottish Government report, The Impacts of COVID-19 on Equality in Scotland.
- 1.2 There was limited equalities data available at a local level to make exact comparisons with the national picture, but we knew from the data we did have access to, the feedback from those working in the third and public sectors, and from the experiences of individuals in our communities, that those unequal impacts of COVID-19 were played out within Aberdeen City.

### 2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 Against this background, in November 2021, the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to Increase support for those who have been most disadvantaged through the pandemic by 2023 (with a focus on women and ethnic minority communities).
- 2.1.1 In terms of “support”, the improvement group initially focused on the existing support services being provided in relevant sectors (e.g., around employability), and how that could be better targeted to groups most disadvantaged by COVID-19. As part of the project, we wanted to better understand if the support available was working for the target communities of the project, or if there were other forms of support that might better meet needs and gaps. To measure impact, the project agreed the number

and/or proportion of women and people from minority ethnic communities accessing employability and financial advice services in the City as the key measure.

### **3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?**

3.1 As a result of discussions within the project group, and initial community engagement, the following changes were tested:

#### Employability Support

1. Test how a co-designed, targeted promotion campaign around employability support available, increases the number of women and people from minority ethnic communities accessing employability support. This was broken down into 4 elements:
  - Targeted promotion using mailing lists to reach minority ethnic communities in the City.
  - Paid-for ad (promotional flyer) to reach women resident in the City.
  - Facebook posting of flyer on pages linked with target communities.
  - Facebook posting of flyer translated in Polish on relevant community pages.

Financial inclusion support – people from ethnic minority communities.

2. Test how targeted promotion of financial inclusion services, including relevant organisations engaging in relevant community spaces, leads to higher take-up of these services by people from minority ethnic communities.

3.2 The main change that was prompted by community engagement and the project was targeted recruitment of the available support services available. A simple flyer was designed which promoted both Pathways and ABZ Works employability support. A Polish version of the flyer was also created. Different methods of promotion were tested, including sharing the flyer on ethnic minority community group pages, a paid advert aimed at women living in Aberdeen, and the Polish language flyer shared with Polish community members.

3.3 As time moved on, and the “cost of living” crisis saw worsening poverty (more people moving into poverty, and those already in poverty moving into deeper poverty) in the City and beyond, it was decided that the project should add an additional focus on financial inclusion, i.e. exploring the barriers that groups, particularly people from ethnic minority communities, face in accessing financial inclusion advice and support. This work was supported by a short-term outreach project that Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) was funded to deliver by the Scottish Government.

### **4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?**

4.1 Yes, the aim has been achieved with an increase in the two areas of support the project focused on: (1) employability support targeted at women and people from minority ethnic communities accessing employability support and (2) financial inclusion support for people from minority ethnic communities, as shown in the charts below.

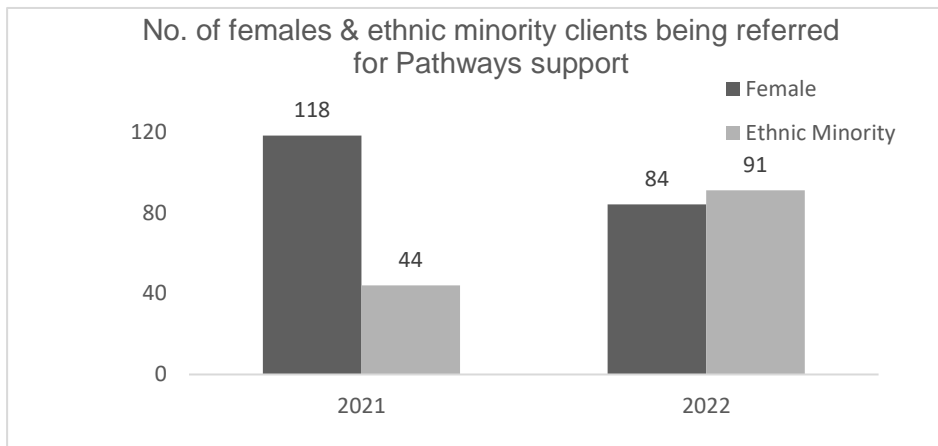
4.2 In terms of employability, we were only able to collect data from Pathways during the project, which limits our understanding of its impact. From the available information, the proportion of people from minority ethnic communities accessing the employability service significantly increased. There was no change in the proportion of females accessing the service (see graphic below).

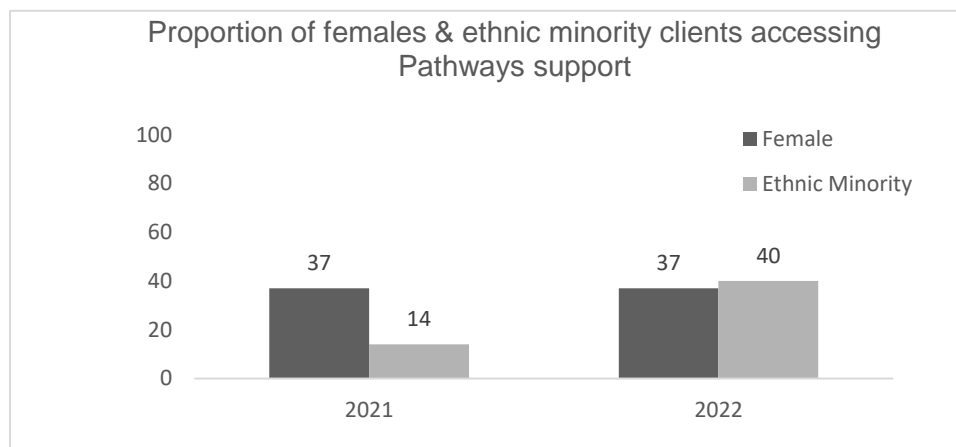
### Employability Support

4.3 The chart shows that there has been a 2.3% increase in employment for females in Aberdeen City which has been the focus of the project, whilst during the same period there has been a 2% decrease in male employment.



4.4 The charts below show the impact of the changes tested with Pathways (employability charity), the data shows that during the time of the test of change there was no movement in the proportion of clients who were female (the number dropped in real terms), while the proportion of clients from ethnic minority backgrounds increased by 186%, with a 107% increase in number of people being referred for support.



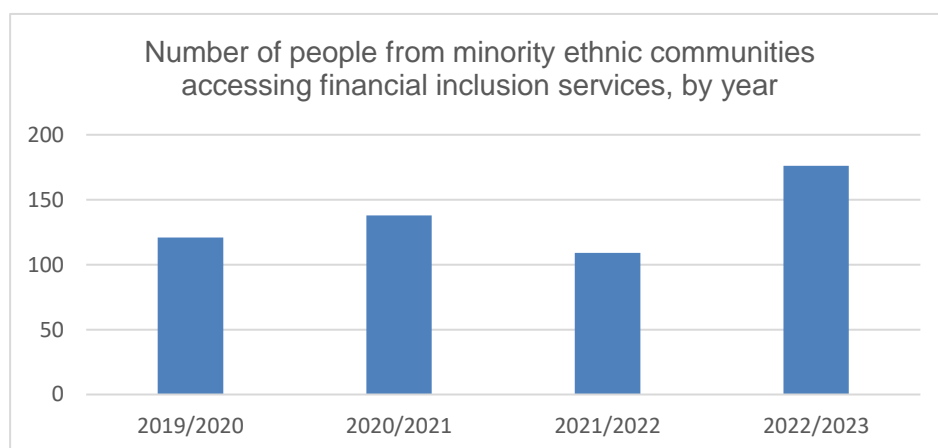


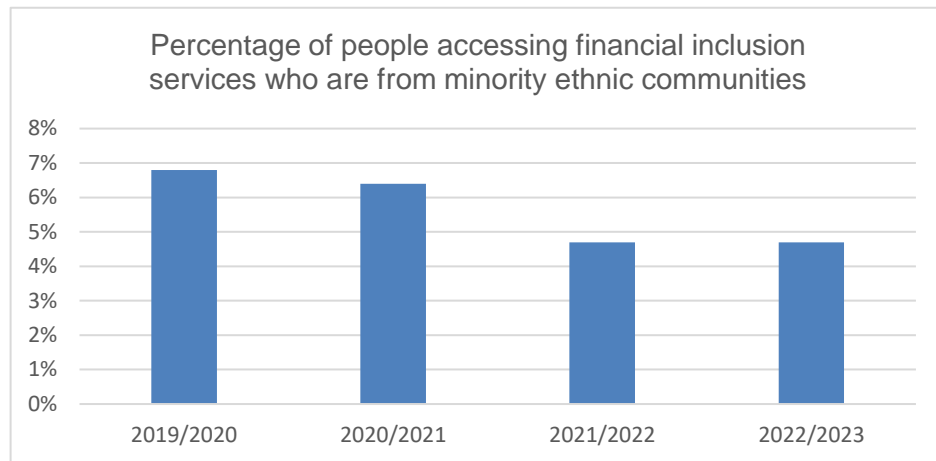
4.5 The data above reflects the impact that the change tested with Pathways had, however it is recognised that significant factors during this time led to changes in the demographics of those accessing these services, e.g. due to Afghan and Ukrainian refugee resettlement.

4.6 The paid Facebook ad targeting women in Aberdeen City had a reach of 2812, with 88 post engagements

(2) Financial inclusion support – people from ethnic minority communities.

4.7 The charts below show that the number of people from ethnic minority communities accessing financial inclusion services increased by 45% during the period of the project. However, whilst the number has increased, it is recognised that the proportion of those people accessing such services who were from minority ethnic communities decreased. This discrepancy is due to an increased proportion of people from these communities living in the City, e.g., due to relatively higher rates of New Scots being accommodated in Aberdeen during this period.





- 4.8 Targeted promotion was a key change across both aspects and as shown by the data above there has been an increase in the number of people from minority ethnic communities accessing support.
- 4.9 A key outcome of the engagement with targeted group has been the identification of a range of additional barriers experienced by minority ethnic communities in accessing financial advice services. This enabled the project to identify and test changes to increase access to financial inclusion support, these included creating a new sign-posting resource with many of the relevant advice and support agencies, including with information about whether interpreting support was available. This was shared in community spaces as well as promoted online. During 2023, individual 1-2-1 support was promoted and provided to 19 individuals - many of these were individuals that were engaged via outreach activities (e.g., GREC’s Drop-in and Language Café, community events/activities, etc) and wouldn’t have access to mainstream services. Individuals were supported with applications to relevant funds and referrals to employability support. At least one individual secured employment and two found volunteering roles.
- 4.10 As well as the 1-2-1 and outreach support, a financial inclusion workshop session was also held within GREC’s Drop-in and Language Café set-up, with 42 individuals in attendance. The session included presentations from ACC, Citizen’s Advice Bureau and CFINE. A resource with the contact details for organisations providing financial inclusion advice and support in Aberdeen and related promotional material was shared online in early 2023 among ethnic minority communities, reaching a total of 1034 individuals.
- 4.11 Below is a case study reflecting the journey of one individual.

Case study

Ali\* is a man who sought asylum in the UK and was granted refugee status after spending a long period in asylum hotels. Ali contacted GREC via the weekly Drop-in and Language Cafe session shortly after receiving his status, seeking assistance with financial inclusion related issues. The project worker provided ongoing one-to-one support to Ali and helped him identify the following issues requiring support:

1. Preparation for employment.
2. Help to liaise with services.

As he received his right to work along with his refugee status, Ali's priority was to prepare for employment by improving his English proficiency and gaining a UK driver's license. The project worker facilitated this by supporting Ali to register for an ESOL class at college, completing a fee waiver form as he could not afford the college tuition fees. GREC also assisted him in attaining a provisional driver's license, as well as a library card to access resources to improve his English and study for a theory test. The project worker additionally arranged for Ali to attend a free driving theory course once his English ability reached a suitable level for said course.

Ali also required assistance to liaise with various services with whom he was struggling to communicate effectively due to the language barrier. The housing element of Ali's Universal Credit claim was insufficient to cover his rent, so the project worker assisted him in completing an application for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), which was granted, meaning his rent was fully covered. The project worker liaised with the City Council's Housing and Benefits teams to ensure DHP would be granted. As Ali was also struggling to manage his energy bills, the project worker made a referral to an organisation who granted Ali support with this.

## **5 HOW HAVE OUR COMMUNITIES/PROTECTED GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT OF THIS**

- 5.1 A conscious effort was made at the start of the project to include community members in shaping the approach. Two community engagement sessions were developed in order to shape up the project. The first was a focus group with participants from GREC's Language Work programme (with individuals experiencing language barriers to finding employment), the second being a session with Aberdeen Women's Alliance. Both sessions gathered feedback from community members about awareness and experiences of employability support, and captured ideas for better, targeted promotion, as well as how identified barriers could potentially be addressed.

## **6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?**

- 6.1 The project did help identify a range of additional barriers experienced by minority ethnic communities in accessing financial advice services. The short-term, outreach financial inclusion project has now been expanded by GREC and will be funded for 3 years (by the Robertson Trust), allowing for further outreach to communities that most need additional support, including awareness raising inputs at the Drop in and Language Café and other relevant community activities. The project will allow for some additional policy officer time, meaning that lived experiences of communities can be better communicated with relevant policy makers. GREC is also a partner of a national, related project (led by Migration Policy Scotland) looking at a wider scale at some of these issues and looking to influence change at a systemic and structural level (including around the better gathering and sharing of relevant data). In addition, there are plans for similar, financial-inclusion themed, sessions to continue within the Language Café model.

## **7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD**

- 7.1 What has been learnt from the project, as well as on-going lessons learned, in terms of barriers to services and how organisations can help address those barriers, will be shared with partners and will help inform projects within the refreshed LOIP. Issues identified will continue to be taken into relevant outcome improvement groups of Community Planning Aberdeen.

- 7.2 Outreach support in the heart of the community and in locations attended by specific groups has shown to be successful and could be spread to a variety of other projects. Such an approach is being considered to be taken forward to increase the uptake of benefits across all communities within the refreshed LOIP.
- 7.3 There is an opportunity for other projects to use existing community groups/facilities such as the Language Café to reach targeted audiences and provide support in a way that meets their needs.

### Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the aim has been achieved and the impact of the outreach approach has been successful and embedded and that the Anti-Poverty Group and Aberdeen Prospers were considering new aims in relation to employability support and financial inclusion as part of the refresh of the LOIP; and
- ii) Note that the outreach financial inclusion project has now been expanded by GREC and will be funded for 3 years (by the Robertson Trust), allowing for further outreach to communities that most need additional support and note the opportunities for spread of this approach across other projects.

### Opportunities and Risks

The following opportunities have been identified through the project:

- Enhanced partnership working across public sector and third sector organisations, to better target advice and support that is essential to addressing inequalities.
- The sharing of resources and joined-up approach that will avoid duplication and reduce costs (e.g. on translation).

The following risks have been identified through the project:

- A lack of consistent equalities data at a local (and sometimes national) level means that measuring impact is challenging.

### Consultation

Anti Poverty Group  
Management Group

### Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

[Project Charter 1.4](#)

#### Contact details:

Dave Black  
Community Development Manager  
Station House Media Unit  
[Dave.Black@shmu.org.uk](mailto:Dave.Black@shmu.org.uk)

Maria Jose Pavez Larrea  
Co-General Manager  
Grampian Regional Equality Council  
[MJPavez@grec.co.uk](mailto:MJPavez@grec.co.uk)