

**Oversight and Governance**

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## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 16 April 2025

2.00 pm

Warspite Room, Council House

**Members:**

Councillor Finn, Chair

Councillor Blight, Vice Chair

Councillors Allison, Cuddihee, Dingle, Goslin, Hendy, P.Nicholson, Poyser, Reilly and Stevens.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf. This meeting will be webcast and available on-line after the meeting. By entering the Warspite Room, Councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

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Tracey Lee  
Chief Executive

# **Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel**

## **1. Apologies**

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

## **3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 05 February 2025.

## **4. Chair's Urgent Business**

To receive reports on business which in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

## **5. Child Poverty Plan (Building Bridges to Opportunity): (Verbal Report)**

## **6. Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance: (Pages 7 - 22)**

## **7. Work Programme: (Pages 23 - 26)**

## **8. Tracking Decisions: (Pages 27 - 28)**

## **Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel**

**Wednesday 5 February 2025**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor Finn, in the Chair.

Councillor Blight, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allison, Cuddihee, Dingle, Goslin, Hendy, P.Nicholson, Poyser and Reilly.

Also in attendance: Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR & OD), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities), Rosie Brookshaw (Democratic Advisor), Phil Burgoyne (Interim Head of Neighbourhoods, Homes and Communities, Plymouth Community Homes), Rob Cock (Head of Delivery, Livewest), Peter Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager), Dave Ryland (Head of Housing Standards), Ruth Tune-Holmes (Technical Lead), and Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities)

The meeting started at 2.01 pm and finished at 4.18 pm.

*Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.*

26. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

27. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held 04 December 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

28. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

29. **Improved Public Connectivity with Plymouth City Council**

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR & OD) introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) A motion on notice had been brought to City Council a year prior about how people connect digitally with Plymouth City Council (PCC);
- b) The motion on notice included the following:

- i) What the performance of the phone system was like;
- ii) How the phone system was advertised;
- iii) How people knew where to get hold of PCC;
- iv) Where the assessment of PCC contact centres were promoted;
- c) PCC's contact centre had changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and had moved to more digital interaction;
- d) There were nearly 60,000 calls to the Customer Hub between 01 April 2024 and 31 December 2024. 96% of these calls were answered;
- e) PCC were pushing their libraries and health and well-being centres as Community Builders so the public could contact the Council through those pathways;
- f) Blue Badge and bus pass application support was ongoing at Plympton, Plymstock and St Budeaux Libraries;
- g) Online digital assistance was also offered to those who were not digitally able.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- h) If a member of the public was registered as being digitally excluded, they would always be able to speak to a member of the team on the phone rather than be signposted online;
- i) Between April and December 2024, there were approximately 3.5 million hits on the PCC website;
- j) There were seasonal peaks and troughs to the number of calls to PCC.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

### 30. **Customer Services Strategy Update**

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR & OD) introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) A transformational programme was being implemented, looking at how PCC could work more efficiently and effectively using modern technology;
- b) Data would be used to target areas which require improvement;
- c) The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) would be explored to support social workers and Adult Social Care workers carry out their reporting;

- d) Feedback from members of the public regarding the use of the PCC website was taken on board and being actioned.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- e) The hope was that AI would increase productivity within PCC and that would create a good value return on the investment into the technology;
- f) PCC already used software to target those who may be vulnerable, including a low-income family tracker;
- g) Members of the public would be informed as to how their data would be used in the future to allow informed consent;
- h) In order to ensure a return on investment, PCC would be using the Government model 'Test, Learn and Grow'.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

31. **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) PCC had built strong relationships across sectors with registered housing providers and other partnerships;
- b) To try and reduce Bed and Breakfast costs post COVID-19, PCC had three key strategies:
  - i) Increase activity to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first instance;
  - ii) To reduce reliance in pay-by-night accommodation;
  - iii) To focus on families and children;
- c) The next focus was around helping those in domestic abuse situations;
- d) There was Government investment to help Plymouth do better than any other Council in the country in terms of tackling homelessness;
- e) Plymouth Access to Housing (PATH) was one of the biggest temporary accommodation providers in the city and worked closely with PCC;
- f) 50% of lets were allocated to general needs housing through Devon Homes Choice;

- g) 70% of the offers from Plymouth Community Homes were addressed by the homeless cohort in Plymouth in December 2024;
- h) The solution to homelessness and temporary accommodation was more permanent accommodation;
- i) Funding pots for homelessness had been amalgamated to give PCC greater flexibility when working with partners;
- j) Thanks were given to the Housing Services Team and all partner organisations who worked to help those who had lost their homes.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- k) PATH would be delivering two houses with a total of 12 bed spaces available to let before the end of March 2025;
- l) Penge Churches Housing Association (PCHA) had 11 accessible homes in development for people with a history of homelessness;
- m) Local connection was an important part as to why people who were homeless stayed in Plymouth. There were also seasonal aspects which effected homeless numbers;
- n) Street begging did not equate to rough sleeping;
- o) Central Government were reviewing their strategy around rough sleeping;
- p) The PATH rough sleeping team kept a log of who was rough sleeping;
- q) Although volunteers helping at Christmas was useful, if members of the public wanted to volunteer all year round they could be contacted service providers as volunteers were needed throughout the year;
- r) Homelessness was part of the Complex Needs Alliance as every story was different;
- s) The nature of homelessness had changed in recent years due to the cost-of-living crisis;
- t) LiveWest had over 3,000 properties in Plymouth and void rates were not high and they worked with Devon Home Choice to prioritise homelessness;
- u) LiveWest were averaging 30 – 40 new builds in Plymouth, a portion of which were allocated to the homeless;
- v) Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) had on average 10 properties voided weekly, with an average void time of 31 days;

- w) At the year to date, PCH had let a total of 294 properties to homeless applicants;
- x) PCH had a development programme which aimed for 300 new properties a year;
- y) PCH and LiveWest were strategic partners of PCC within the Plan for Homes scheme;
- z) In the past nine years, Plymouth had 7,581 new homes built, 1,980 of which were affordable. Therefore, 26% were affordable homes and of that percentage, 65% were rented and 35% were low cost ownership;
- aa) In the past two years, LiveWest had delivered approximately 80 homes, 64 of which were for social rent using Homes England grant funding;
- bb) Homes England were more likely to provide funding to Plymouth due to PCC subsidising funds through reduced land value and topping up of viability gaps;
- cc) PCC allowed shared ownership and rent to buy models through their planning policies;
- dd) The Government had provided an increase in the Homelessness Prevention Grant for Plymouth and 49% of this would be used for homelessness prevention work, including stopping people from becoming homeless, preventing them from staying homeless, and staying out of the homelessness cycle;
- ee) PCC would learn from the work Young Devon were doing with the YMCA, which would lead to more work with prevention of young people, and Care Experienced young people, becoming homeless and more support for victims of domestic abuse;
- ff) This year to date, 11% of the presentations for homelessness were due to domestic abuse;
- gg) Work was being undertaken on PCC's supported and specialist housing needs assessment;
- hh) It was important to ensure that new communities were balanced communities;
- ii) Headline data sets were published in bi-annual performance reports;
- jj) A homelessness update would be brought to scrutiny every six months;
- kk) PCC would give a statement to Government about their intentions within the next five years due to the lack of renewal of the Joint Local Plan, however the Joint Local Plan was still the planning policy until after Local Government Reorganisation had taken place.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

32. **Work Programme**

The Committee agreed to note its Work Programme.

33. **Tracking Decisions**

The Committee agreed to note its Tracking Decisions.



## Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	16 April 2025
Title of Report:	<b>Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance</b>
Lead Member:	Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development, and Communities)
Lead Strategic Director:	Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author:	Sarah Gooding, Policy and Intelligence Advisor
Contact Email:	sarah.gooding@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	I/25
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

### Purpose of Report

To respond to a request from the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel scrutinise the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty compliance.

### Recommendations and Reasons

#### I. Your Recommendation:

Members are asked to note the covering report and Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity document that was received and approved by Cabinet on March 10 2025.

*Reason: The report sets out the progress the Council has made in 2024/25 towards meeting:*

- *Its Public Sector Equality Duty and promoting equality in 2024-2025*
- *The outcomes set out in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2024-25*
- *Plymouth City Council's equality objectives for 2024/25- 2028/29*

### Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. N/A. Under the Equality Act 2010 Plymouth City Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This duty requires the Local Authority to produce and publish an annual report setting out what steps it has taken to comply with the duty.

### Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out our ambition to be 'one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone' and its mission is to make Plymouth a fairer, greener city, where everyone does their bit. To achieve this, we need to ensure any decision we take does not adversely impact communities sharing protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010).

One of the key themes running through the Plymouth Plan is the ambition to be a Welcoming City where every citizen feels safe and every person who lives in or visits the city will be treated fairly and with respect. The new equality objectives outlined in the report will support Plymouth City Council to continue working with partners to foster community cohesion and support Plymouth’s ambition to be a welcoming city.

**Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**  
Officer resources will be needed to carry out actions to deliver against the equality objectives 2024/25-2028/29. These resources will be met from within existing budgets.

**Financial Risks**

It is not anticipated that the proposed actions will cause negative financial impacts

**Legal Implications**

This report confirms how the Council will continue to meet its public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010.

**Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

It is not anticipated that the proposed actions will cause negative environmental impacts.

**Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:**

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

This is not applicable because the subject of the report ensures that due regard has been given to equality.

**Appendices**

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and							

**Background papers:**

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Asset s	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Tracey Lee, Chief Executive											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 02/04/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Chris Penberthy, Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development, and Communities Date approved: 02/04/2025											

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# OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Policy and Intelligence Team



## Summary

This paper sets out the commitment that Plymouth City Council has made to promoting equality. It explores the legal duties that the Council must comply with and provides examples of how these have been fulfilled. Specifically, the paper outlines the progress that the Council has made in delivering against its equality objectives and its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2024/25. A refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will be developed for the next 3 years to support the delivery of the current equality objectives up to 2028 and this will be published separately.

In addition to delivering specific projects and interventions under the action plan, it is crucial to remember that it is incumbent on everyone in Plymouth City Council to play their part. As the Council faces unprecedented budgetary pressures, it is vital that due regard is paid to equality and diversity, and actions that support this agenda continue to be mainstreamed across the Council.

## I. Context

### I.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 extended statutory protection across nine 'protected characteristics'. It recognised new forms of discrimination and introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

As an Authority listed in Schedule 19 of the Act, we are subject to the PSED. The PSED consists of a general equality duty supported by specific duties which are imposed by secondary legislation.

As an organisation, we are expected to demonstrate 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

On 27 March 2023, the Council unanimously supported the motion to 'Treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic'<sup>1</sup>. Plymouth became one of 29 Local Authorities across the UK to take this position although this number has now reached over 80. We believe that it is vital to recognise the additional challenges and barriers that care experienced individuals face. Though their experiences will have varied, the challenges faced by these individuals can have profound and lasting impacts. Recognising care experience as a protected characteristic will provide us, and other public bodies, with greater authority to put in place policies and programmes which promote better outcomes for care experienced people.

The Equality Act says that we must exercise due regard to equality when we make decisions, in a way that is reasonable and proportionate to the decision being taken. To discharge this duty, we remain firmly committed to conducting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on all member decisions taken in

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<sup>1</sup> A care-experienced individual is someone who has been looked after by the local authority at any point, for any length of time. Care experienced individuals include people with a wide range of experiences including those who have lived with Foster Carers, in Residential Children's Homes or who have been adopted.

the context of our Leader's scheme of delegation. We do this to ensure they do not adversely impact our different communities.

### 1.2 Specific Equality Duties

The aims of the PSED are supported by specific duties set out in separate regulations made by the Secretary of State. Listed authorities in England are required to:

- At least annually from 30 March 2018
  - publish information about their employees and other persons affected by their policies and practices to demonstrate compliance with the general duty.
  - publish gender pay gap information relating to the employees; the form and content of this publication is set out in a schedule to the regulations.
- At least every four years, prepare and publish one or more objectives that they think are needed to further any of the aims of the General Equality Duty.

### 1.3 Our equality information

Alongside this document, we have published our [Equality Profiles](#), which include data and intelligence about our residents and service users, covering all of the nine protected characteristics from the Equality Act. These are:

- |                                   |                       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ▪ Age                             | ▪ Gender Reassignment |
| ▪ Disability                      | ▪ Race                |
| ▪ Religion or Belief              | ▪ Sex                 |
| ▪ Marriage and Civil Partnerships | ▪ Sexual Orientation  |
| ▪ Pregnancy and Maternity         |                       |

As an organisation committed to inclusion, we recognise that other groups such as veterans, carers, and people with experience of the care system can also face additional barriers. Equality Profiles are also available on people with care experience and those who have previously served in the regular or reserve UK armed forces (veterans).

Our Equality Profiles are updated annually to keep them as current as possible. The [Plymouth Report](#) is another useful source of further data about our diverse communities.

### 1.4 Policy

The diversity of our city and workforce is one of our greatest strengths and assets. We put equality and diversity at the centre of all our work. Our approach and commitment to equality is also set out in our Equality and Diversity Policy. This is integral to our commitment to making Plymouth 'one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone'.

In the spirit of that commitment, we have worked to ensure we deliver services to all our communities in a way that eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity, and fosters good relations.

Our Equality and Diversity Policy was recently reviewed and republished in light of our new commitment to treat care experience as a protected characteristic and our refreshed equality objectives.

### 1.5 Plymouth City Council's Corporate Plan

Plymouth City Council and its partners are committed to the shared vision to become 'one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone'. To achieve this vision, we have adopted a set of values that underpin our commitment to equality and diversity in the Council's [Corporate Plan](#).

We believe in:

- Democracy
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Co-operation

### **1.6 Customer feedback**

Plymouth City Council is committed to the highest standards of customer service. We are committed to treating all of our customers with fairness and respect and encourage feedback about our services. Our primary mechanism for collecting customer feedback is through our online system Firmstep. Whilst we monitor customer complaints, we do not do this against the protected characteristics. However, we have refreshed our demographic monitoring guidance as the first step towards this.

### **1.7 The Equality Framework for Local Government**

The [Equality Framework for Local Government](#) (EFLG) is an equality and diversity tool for local government developed by the Local Government Association (LGA). The EFLG is also a way for the Council to deliver against the PSED. It consists of four elements assessed against three levels of achievement: 'developing', 'achieving' and 'excellence'.

The assessed elements are:

- Leadership and organisational commitment
- Understanding and working with communities
- Diverse and engaged workforce
- Responsive services and customer care

As a Council, we have committed to working towards the 'excellence level' of the EFLG. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will set out how we as a Council plan to continue working towards this.

## **2. Our Equality Objectives**

We are committed to treating everyone with respect and dignity and working towards creating a fairer city. Under our PSED, we must publish one or more equality objectives every four years. We last set our equality objectives in 2024.

Our equality objectives correspond to the three main strands of the general equality duty. This provides a strong link and solid evidence to demonstrate that we are discharging our duty and making progress towards the aims of the Equality Act 2010.

Furthermore, we have chosen our equality objectives to reflect the concerns of a broad spectrum of protected characteristics to avoid establishing a hierarchy of discrimination, whilst also reflecting the particular challenges faced by our local diverse communities.

### **1. Plymouth is a Welcoming City where we will work in partnership to:**

- **promote equality, diversity and inclusion**
- **facilitate community cohesion**
- **support people with different backgrounds and lived experiences to get on well together**

As part of a programme of work, we undertook the following activities in 2024/25:

- We have continued to maintain our [Equality and Diversity Calendar](#) and use it to help us celebrate our city's diversity in a meaningful way.
- We have continued to mark equality and diversity dates during 2024-2025 on social media, our external Newsroom and via internal communications as appropriate. These have included

Black History Month, Hate Crime Awareness Week, World Mental Health Day, 16 Days of Activism, Care Leaver's Week and Adult Safeguarding Week. In May 2024 we worked with the Electoral Commission on a pilot to ensure that people with learning disabilities and autism understand and feel part of the voting process. The Council also created a new webpage centred around D-Day and the history of the event in Plymouth. We also marked Volunteers' Week in June 2024, celebrating our volunteers at key locations such as The Box, Poole Farm and our Libraries.

- In 2023, we convened an informal group of trusted partners and equality, diversity and inclusion experts as a 'critical friends' group. Led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Co-operative Development and Communities, this is an informal group with the shared aspiration to make Plymouth a welcoming city for everyone. The group have continued to meet during 2024 and support the delivery of the Welcoming City Programme.
- The Critical Friends group are actively engaging with Destination Plymouth in the refresh of the Visitor Strategy and city branding. The key aim of the refresh is to position the city as a place to 'live, work and visit and enable city businesses and communities to align their efforts and resources.
- We held an EDI leads roundtable on 8 October 2024 for EDI leads of larger organisations across the city. The roundtable discussed the valuable role of culture in achieving Plymouth's vision of being a Welcoming City with representatives of Plymouth's cultural sector and shared best practice and current challenges. The group also shared information on events marked by their organisation and discussed ideas around citywide collaboration. The roundtable was positively received by those who attended, and another event is planned for Spring 2025.
- We continue to strive to ensure that all of our events are accessible. Armed Forces Day achieved bronze award status from Attitude is Everything as part of their industry-recognised policy standard Live Events Access Charter. Both of the Council's signature events, the British Firework Championships and Armed Forces Day, are now accredited. We continue to work with the Events Access and Inclusion Group to organise mystery shops at our events, and will continue to do this for 2026, so that we can annually review our processes and make positive change where appropriate. Our Events Team aims to achieve silver award status with the charter for both The British Firework Championships and Armed Forces Day by the end of 2026.
- Our civic leaders continue to demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity. The Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor have continued to engage with different communities living in Plymouth during this period. For example, attendance at Plymouth Hope Festival for the launch of Refugee Week, celebrating Eid with the Plymouth Bangladeshi Association and hosting the Romanian National Day flag raising and reception.
- The Community Builders team continue to focus on asset-based approaches and initiatives that promote community cohesion and connecting people within communities from specific communities of interest and diversity e.g. LGBTQ+, young people, older people, people with disabilities and men. The Community Builder for Ethnically Diverse Communities works in partnership to develop engagement opportunities and community-based support for communities. Examples include attending fresher's week to engage with international students and hosting refugee week events as well as working with services to ensure communities are involved in co-design. Other recent examples include working with the Adult Safeguarding Engagement Team to bring conversations closer to diverse communities and being a member of the Anti-racism Allyship who have recently been responding to community tensions.
- Plymouth City Council recently invited individuals and groups to apply for a grant to address the riots that happened in the summer. Successful applications have included initiatives to understand the causes of the disorder to enable the city to move forward together and increase community cohesion, ensuring everyone feels safe and welcomed in the city. The council was awarded £600,000 to support communities that were impacted. Over 100 applications were received, with the funding being awarded to 42 organisations, including over



£80,000 to six projects that are working collaboratively to deliver a range of initiatives for children, young people, and schools. More information can be found [here](#).

- In response to the riots of Summer 2024, we also reviewed and updated our 2024/25 EDI Action Plan.
- Through the Local Authority Housing Fund, we have resettled 15 Afghan families into properties and expect to welcome a minimum of 11 additional Afghan families over the next 12-18 months. In partnership with the Home Office and Ministry of Defence, we have also matched 7 families with Service Family accommodation and private rented properties via the Afghan resettlement programme.

**2. Plymouth City Council will give specific consideration to care experienced people in our decision-making to raise aspirations, increase opportunities and seek to improve their life outcomes, including access to training, employment and housing, and will encourage other organisations to do the same.**

On 27 March 2023, the Council unanimously supported the motion to ‘Treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic’<sup>2</sup> in recognition of the additional challenges and barriers that care experienced individuals face. Though their experiences will have varied, the challenges faced by these individuals can have profound and lasting impacts.

The following activities were undertaken in 2024/25 to support the delivery of this objective:

- We are continuing to engage with the Care Experienced Council.
- Our application forms and related recruitment and selection policy were updated in May 2024 to reflect care experience under the Guaranteed Interview scheme.
- We are working with partners who are delivering a pilot programme and use the learning from this to inform the development of an Employment Pathway for Care Leavers.
- We are proactively trying to increase the number of public and private sector bodies who demonstrate strong corporate parenting responsibilities and who promote better outcomes for those with care experience in the city. We have written to local employer networks in the city to ask for their support in ensuring that our care leavers get the same opportunities in life as others.
- Our corporate parenting support offer for businesses hosting care experienced young people in apprenticeships and other employment opportunities was launched as part of Care Leavers’ week in October 2024.
- As part of a campaign to support care experienced young people into employment, education and training, communications activity was undertaken to coincide with Care Leavers’ week in October 2024. An event was also held with partners during for young people to come and find out about the support and opportunities available to access education, employment and training from employers in the city e.g. health and education providers.
- We have reviewed our commissioning processes including co-design to ensure care experience is identified as a protected characteristic. A co-production guide for commissioners has been developed in partnership with Changing Futures. This was launched in January 2025, together with training for commissioning staff.
- Care leavers are supported with housing options that enable them to sustain involvement in education, training and work. The Department for Work and Pensions will be delivering workshops shortly for Council staff and partners around discretionary housing benefit and how young people can be supported. We will continue to press for a change to the criteria so

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<sup>2</sup> A care-experienced individual is someone who has been looked after by the local authority at any point, for any length of time. Care experienced individuals include people with a wide range of experiences including those who have lived with Foster Carers, in Residential Children’s Homes or who have been adopted.

that care experienced young people living in supported accommodation are still entitled to enhanced Housing Benefit even if they are in employment.

- Through our Skills Launchpad we have appointed a Youth Outreach Coordinator with a specific caseload of 16 to 18-year-olds looked after by the Virtual School in a mentor-style relationship with a 'Critical Parent'. The Coordinator helps to educate carers whilst building trusted relationships with those in care from their home setting to engage the young people with the Youth Hub and take steps to progress into education, employment or training. We have already seen a very positive impact within eight months as all young people engaging with the coordinator progressed into a positive next step towards education, employment or training.
- In our recent budget engagement survey, respondents were invited to select if they were care experienced as part of our demographic monitoring. This has also been included in our City Survey taking place in 2025. Demographic monitoring allows us to better understand specific communities to guide decision-making and service delivery.
- We want children in care in Plymouth to experience similar health and wellbeing outcomes as children and young people in the wider community. Updates on this are reported quarterly to the Corporate Parenting Board alongside benchmarking data comparing us with our statistical neighbours and national data.
- Plymouth Active Leisure (PAL) now offer free gym and swim access to all Plymouth City Council Care Leavers from their 18th until their 25th birthday. This includes Plymouth Life Centre, Plympton Pool and Brickfields.

**3. Plymouth City Council will continue to build and develop a diverse workforce that represents the community and citizens it serves. We will learn from our communities and other organisations so that we get this right and we will encourage other employers to do the same.**

Plymouth City Council is committed to equal opportunities and the fair treatment of its workforce. We want to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to progress and meet their potential.

As an employer with over 250 employees, we have an obligation to [report on our gender pay gap](#). We monitor pay equality across different employee groups.

Under our specific equality duties, we publish annual equality monitoring data which covers the demographic breakdown of our workforce, as well as our recruitment processes and employees leaving the organisation. This information is found in our [Workforce Equality Profile](#).

As an organisation, we must ensure that all our employees feel welcomed, are treated with dignity and respect and are encouraged to meet their potential.

Progress against this Equality Objective includes:

- Continuing to support our 9 employee networks which aim to help foster a positive culture, offer networking opportunities to employees, and encourage an understanding and celebration of difference within the organisation. These networks are continuing to develop and include:
  - Disability Network
  - Carer's Network
  - Faith and Belief Network
  - LGBTQ+ Network
  - Men's Network
  - Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage (Reach) Network
  - Women's Network
  - Armed Forces Network
  - Neurodivergent Staff Network (new for 2024/25)

- Dates have been set for staff network leads meetings throughout 2025.
- We also ran a number of engagement and listening sessions for staff following the public disorder incidents in August in the city and across the country.
- We are hosting our very first Neurodiversity Conference in March 2025 during Neurodiversity Celebration Week. This event will aim to share best practice between employers, organisational and employee experiences, as well as showcase and share resources and general information to other employers, employees, and prospective employees/their families. We are inviting employers across the city to have a stall at this event to showcase their input with individuals across the city and how they support specific individuals who may be neurodiverse into employment and training as well as throughout their careers.
- Recruitment data is being collated to enable analysis and identify underrepresented groups based on our community. We have also reviewed our recruitment materials to ensure inclusivity and accessibility to ensure diverse talent pool.
- We are working towards achieving Disability Confident Leader Status by June 2025. A working group has been established, and we are currently completing a self-assessment form.
- We are now a 'signatory' on the Disability Employment Charter (as of October 2024).
- We remain a White Ribbon Accredited organisation as part of our ongoing commitment to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). This builds upon the work of the VAWG Commission which was created in 2022 to review what is being done across the city to educate, prevent and deter VAWG.
- A plan of research is underway to review our overall approach to learning and development to ensure it is appropriate and is inclusive and accessible. We are exploring best practice; other employer approaches and engaging with our networks. A revised offer will be available commencing roll out 2025. EDI training will be a core component of the new management and leadership development programme. We also have a range of eLearning in place on topics such as modern slavery and human trafficking, equality in the workplace and domestic abuse.

**4. Plymouth will support diverse communities so they feel confident to seek support and advice, report crime and anti-social behaviour, including hate crime and hate incidents, and work with partners to ensure Plymouth is a city where everybody feels safe and welcome.**

We have continued to work with our partners to ensure that victims of hate incidents and hate crimes receive appropriate support and that people feel confident and understand how to report incidents. We have also been working hard to raise awareness of the importance of reporting hate incidents and hate crimes via third party reporting centres.

We will continue to work with communities and partner agencies across the criminal justice system and voluntary and community colleagues to achieve a positive outcome for victims.

In 2023 we signed the Community Safety Charter showing our commitment to promoting a culture that does not tolerate anti-social behaviour, harassment, intimidation and hostility towards others. We proactively promote this charter to other organisations in the city.

A breakdown of hate crimes/incidents within Plymouth along with perceptions of safety amongst different groups can be found within our [Equality Profiles](#).

Progress against this Equality Objective includes raising awareness and engagement activity such as:

- Our Safer Communities team maintaining a close working relationship with the Police Diverse Communities Team (DCT). They liaise regularly to ensure relevant information is shared (e.g. community tensions, increasing reports of hate crime) and work in partnership to prevent and address any concerns impacting Plymouth's diverse communities.

- Our Safer Communities team continuing work in partnership with Community Builders to understand any concerns impacting the city's diverse communities, including community tensions, cohesiveness, or hate crime.
- The council being a standing member of the city's Community Reference Group. This meeting brings together representatives from Plymouth's diverse communities with statutory agencies as an opportunity to improve our relationship, understand any concerns, and work in partnership to address these.
- All operational frontline officers and the team manager and all of our Community Builders are trained to take third-party reports of hate crime.
- An online training session for staff and elected members around hate crime and third-party reporting is being delivered in March 2025.
- We have commissioned the delivery of anti-racism bystander training aimed at giving people the skills to challenge hate crime and support victims.
- Our Community Safety Team took part in a range of events and community engagement opportunities over Hate Crime Awareness Week in October 2024 including engagement with local businesses owned by global majority communities, attending the British Red Cross drop-in for the asylum-seeker and refugee community, and attending the LGBTQ+ Derriford Hospital staff network. The team also held a multi-agency event in the city centre with the safe bus.
- Plymouth held a second M.A.N Culture conference in September 2024. M.A.N Culture is a network that was set up in 2021 with funding secured by Plymouth City Council, to help change the conversation with men about violence against women and girls. The conference brought together individuals, organisations, and institutions from both the city and the broader Devon and Cornwall region to explore the role of masculinity.
- In partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police, we have introduced an Evening and Night-time Economy Predatory Behaviour Disruption Partnership aiming to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the Evening and Nighttime Economy (ENTE) and women involved in street-based sex work, by using civil tools and powers (traditionally used for antisocial behaviour) as an early intervention to predatory behaviour. As a result of this partnership, 18 individuals behaving in a predatory manner causing women to feel harassed, alarmed and distressed in Plymouth's ENTE within the past 12 months have had a joint early intervention from the council and police. None of these individuals would have met the threshold for criminal investigation otherwise therefore their predatory behaviour would have remained unchallenged without these interventions.

We know that when communities are well connected, they are more likely to have better health outcomes and increased levels of cohesion. To measure cohesion in Plymouth, within our survey work, we ask whether residents feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This question was included in the 2022 City Survey as a measure of community cohesion and more specifically to measure performance against our equality objective.

The question regarding residents who think that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together was asked in the 2022 City Survey, using the same methodology as previous Plymouth City Surveys. The results show that 42 per cent of respondents agreed that Plymouth is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, while 14 per cent disagreed. The proportion of residents agreeing with this statement has increased compared with 39 per cent who agreed in 2020 and 38 per cent in 2018. Plymouth's cohesion score is currently 77 per cent; this excludes the neutral options and is an improvement on 74 per cent in 2020. A further Plymouth City Survey will be delivered in 2025.

### **3. Demonstrating our commitment**

#### **3.1 Summary of recent activity**

In addition to publishing our progress towards meeting our equality objectives, the Public Sector Equality Duty requires that we publish information to show that we are compliant with the Equality Act General Duty. This section describes some of the work we did to promote equality, tackle discrimination and to encourage good relations between different groups last year.

We have continued to work hard to promote equality within communities and to ensure that our services are accessible. As a Council, we value the contribution that people and communities can make and want to harness that potential to work together for a fairer, greener, and healthier city where everyone can enjoy an outstanding quality of life. Our [community engagement principles](#) set out our approach to community engagement.

We are proud that some of the steps that we have taken to promote equality include:

- Working with our partners within the Changing Futures Programme to understand the needs of people with lived experiences within the complex needs system.
- Promoting inclusive growth via the Plymouth Charter development programme. This work has been funded through the C-Care project, an EU Interreg funded project which aims to better understand how the Plymouth economy can promote inclusion and support flexible working to create an economy that works for everybody.
- Continuing to analyse findings from the 2021 Census to allow us to understand the demographics and changing needs of our communities. This insight is helping to inform our Equality Profiles and EIAs.
- Forming a city-wide digital inclusion network, led by Plymouth City Council and made up of groups and organisations across the city, to deliver joined-up interventions to overcome the main barriers to people getting online - access, skills, confidence and motivation.
  - The Changing Futures forum provides a space to explore ideas to promote IT and Digital Inclusion for people with experience of multiple disadvantage in Plymouth. This enables them to engage with services and information they would otherwise struggle to access because they do not have a suitable mobile phone, credit, device or knowledge. Funding is available through the forum to test and support new projects proposed by members of the forum.
  - Volunteers under the Community Digital Volunteer Scheme launched in July 2024 are being trained to offer informal advice, information and support to adults in their local community who either want to get online and learn how to use a computer for the first time or improve their confidence with the basics. The scheme takes referrals from Wellbeing and Family hubs and Adult Social Care in addition to facilitating a number of drop-in sessions around the city where an appointment with a digital volunteer can be booked via our Contact Centre or libraries to help those people who require digital assistance. Our libraries offer free access to computers and WiFi. They run regular courses and sessions helping people to learn and build on their digital skills.
- Updating our EIA template to allow space for consideration of the impacts that the council's decisions may have on care-experienced individuals.
- Working with council colleagues and partners in the community we are working on a number of pieces of enquiry, research and evaluation which contribute to the local and national knowledge base and helps us to understand better how we can reduce the impact of inequalities. Examples of specific projects include:
  - Using play to improve communication skills in young children in preparation for school.
  - Evaluating our response to violence against women and girls in the city.
  - Using ecotherapy to support young people with additional needs.
  - Supporting ways of increasing food security.

In addition to specific projects the HDRC has supported council colleagues and community partners to understand and use research and enquiry techniques to improve their knowledge and understanding, particularly around appreciative enquiry.

### 3.2 Our Members

Our members have an important role in ensuring that equality and diversity is at the centre of the organisation as set out in the Council Constitution which states:

"We the people of Plymouth, through our elected representatives to Plymouth City Council, ordain and establish this Constitution today 30 January 2012 in order that it will assist in the elimination of discrimination and inequality, promote social and economic well-being, environmental sustainability and opportunity for all and establish good and open governance of our city and its inhabitants."

Members are required to consider equality and diversity when they make decisions. To support members in their role we offer online Local Government Association (LGA) developed equality and diversity training to all councillors as part of their induction to their role. This training helps members to understand different equality and diversity issues and ensures that they are able to deliver their duties in accordance with the Councillor Code of Conduct. Members received online Councillor Equality and Diversity training in November 2023 and this was well attended and received. Members are also encouraged to undertake further LGA distance learning.

## 5. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025 – 2028

A new Action Plan to cover the next three years will be developed to define how we will work towards the delivery of our current equality objectives. The Action Plan will also include some of the wider activity that the council will undertake to support its equality and diversity ambitions.

### 5.1 Key activities for 2025 / 2026

Over the next 12 months, the Council is committing to undertake the following activities:

- Continue to deliver the Welcoming City programme of work in partnership with the Critical Friends Group, including hosting an event to engage Equality, Diversity and Inclusion leads in partner organisations in best practice and collaborative approaches.
- Hold a second roundtable event for EDI leads in large organisations within the city, with a focus on care experience.
- Continue to mark a range of equality and diversity-related dates on our Equality and Diversity calendar each year internally and externally and work with partners across the city to mark, celebrate or commemorate where appropriate.
- Continue to gather and learn from feedback from the Community Builders working with communities and the Appreciative Enquiries that have been held.
- Continue to work with Changing Futures to ensure participation from people with complex lives and continue to build partnerships with refugee and asylum organisations in the city.
- Work with our partners to carry out in-depth research into health inequality within Plymouth as part of the Health Determinants Research Collaboration programme.
- Undertake a full review of our Equality Impact Assessment process (EIA) and refresh the related guidance.
- Continue to embed the treating of care experience as if it were a protected characteristic within our commissioning processes for health and social care contracts across children's and adult services and procurement.
- Continue to work with the Events Access and Inclusion Group to annually review our processes and make positive change where appropriate. The Events Team aims to achieve silver award

status with the charter for both The British Firework Championships and Armed Forces Day by the end of 2026.

- Review our People Strategy in spring 2025 following engagement across the organisation through 'Culture Workshops' to help develop the strategy.
- Work towards achieving Disability Confident Leader Status by June 2025.

These are just a few examples to demonstrate the breadth of activity planned over the next 12 months and beyond. More detail will be outlined in our updated Action Plan.

***Published by Plymouth City Council***

*This document is available in other languages and in accessible formats - please contact our Policy and Intelligence Team or by phoning 01752 668000.*

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## Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Work Programme 2024/25



**Please note that the work programme is a 'live' document and subject to change at short notice. The information in this work programme is intended to be of strategic relevance.**

For general enquiries relating to the Council's Scrutiny function, including this Committee's work programme, please contact Rosie Brookshaw (Democratic Advisor) on 01752 305155.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Cabinet Member/Lead Officer
<b>26 July 2024</b>	Serious Violence Duty Action Plan & Funding Proposal	(3)	Deferred from the meeting on 21 February 2024.	Councillor Haydon/Tracey Naismith
	Plan for Public Toilets Review	(3)	Identified for consideration at a work programming meeting on 10 July 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Ann Thorp
<b>16 October 2024</b>	Bereavement Services Update	(5)	Identified for Consideration at the 30 November 2022 meeting. A detailed report would be provided to scrutiny upon the transition to opening and the future of the Western Mill and Efford sites.	Councillor Haydon/Graham Smith
	General Update from Street Services Performance	(3)	Identified during a work programming session in July 2024.	Councillor Briars-Delve/Philip Robinson
<b>4 December 2024</b>	Housing and Homelessness (Verbal Update)	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Matt Garrett/Jackie Kings
	City Centre Parking	TBC	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Coker/Mike Artherton
	Household Waste and Recycling (to	TBC	Identified for consideration in 2022/23	Councillor Briars-Delve/Philip Robinson

	include Reuse and Food Waste)			
<b>5 February 2025</b>	Housing and Homelessness	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Matt Garrett/Jackie Kings
	Introduction from the Chief Operating Officer	N/A	Identified at a work programming meeting on 10 July 2024	Jens Gemmel
	Customer Services Strategy	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Dann/Jens Gemmel
	Improved Public Connectivity with City Council	(5)	Motion on Notice from 20 November 2023 meeting of City Council.	Councillor Dann/Pete Honeywell
<b>16 April 2025</b>	Child Poverty Plan (Building Bridges to Opportunity)	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Professor Steve Maddern
	Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance	(4)	Identified for consideration at the July 2024 meeting.	Councillor Penberthy/Kevin McKenzie
<b>Items to be scheduled for 2025/26</b>				
<b>2025/26</b>	Public Toilets Strategy Review	(3)	Motion on Notice from 29 January 2024 meeting of City Council.	Councillor Penberthy/Ann Thorp
<b>2025/26</b>	Cost of Living Taskforce (Building Bridges to Opportunity)	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/
<b>2025/26</b>	Grit Bin Policy Review	(3)	Identified for consideration at the October 2024 meeting.	Councillor Coker/Philip Robinson
<b>2025/26</b>	Bus Shelter Contract	(4)	Identified for consideration at the December 2024 meeting.	Councillor Coker/TBC
<b>Items Identified for Select Committee Reviews</b>				

**Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool (P-Score)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Yes (=1)</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	
<b>P</b> ublic Interest	Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community?			
<b>A</b> bility	Could Scrutiny have an influence?			
<b>P</b> erformance	Is this an area of underperformance?			
<b>E</b> xtent	Does the topic affect people living, working, or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth?			
<b>R</b> eplication	Will this be the only opportunity for public scrutiny?			
	Is the topic due planned to be the subject of an Executive Decision?			
<b>Total:</b>			High/Medium/Low	

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Medium</b>	<b>3-4</b>

Low	I-2
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**Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Tracking Decisions 2024/25**

<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Recommendation/Action</b>	<b>Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress</b>
Minute 7  <b>Serious Violence Duty Action Plan &amp; Funding Proposal</b>  26 July 2024	The Panel would be provided with the Annual Strategic Crime Data which would detail the priorities for the Community Safety Partnership for the following 12 months.	<b>Date Due: December 2024.</b>  <b>Officer: Tracey Naismith/ Devon and Cornwall Police</b>  <b>Progress: Formal request made, data due December 2024.</b>
Minute 9  <b>Work Programme</b>  26 July 2024	Request from a Cabinet Member to hold a task and finish group in November 2024 to discuss changes to the Council Tax Relief Scheme, as Panel dates did not line up with the timeline for the changes. Democratic Support to confirm if it was in the remit of the Panel and if so, organise session.	<b>Date Due: 16 August 2024</b>  <b>Officer: Rosie Brookshaw/Ross Jago</b>  <b>Progress: Late July 2024, confirmed as under the remit of this panel.</b>
Minute 9  <b>Work Programme</b>  26 July 2024	Request from Panel Members that the relevant Cabinet Members provide them with a list of projects that would be of interest to scrutiny for this municipal year.	<b>Date Due: 14 August 2024</b>  <b>Officer: Rosie Brookshaw</b>  <b>Progress: Formal request made 31 July 2024. Chased 04 September 2024.</b>
<b>Improved Public Connectivity with Plymouth City Council</b>  05 February 2025	Request from Panel Members to receive the contact data from the past five years.	<b>Due Date: ASAP</b>  <b>Officer: Peter Honeywell</b>  <b>Progress: Data being compiled. Chased 08 April 2025.</b>

**Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Tracking Decisions 2024/25**

<b>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025</b>  05 February 2025	Request from Panel Members to receive an overview and definition of 'local connection' in line with national guidance.	<b>Due Date: ASAP</b>  <b>Officer: Ruth Tune-Holmes</b>  <b>Progress: Request made 05 February 2025. Chased 08 April 2025.</b>
<b>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025</b>  05 February 2025	Request from Panel Members to receive information from Plymouth Community Homes regarding the breakdown of social housing statistics.	<b>Due Date: ASAP</b>  <b>Officer: Phil Burgoyne (Interim Head of Neighbourhoods, Homes and Communities, Plymouth Community Homes)</b>  <b>Progress: Request made 05 February 2024. Chased 08 April 2025.</b>