

# FCE Qualitative Research & Community Feedback Snapshot

*Themes from FCE's 'Lets Chat' – conversations about equality, fairness, the local Equality Outcomes and 'what really matters' for diverse residents in Fife.*



*Snapshot: 2 October 2024 – 21 March 2025*

## **Section 1:**

### **‘Let’s Chat’ open ended conversations about living and accessing services locally.**

Discussions about “What is working well, what is positive, or what is missing that you would like more of?”

### **Key Themes**

1. Understanding by staff on the impact on multiple areas of life (i.e. not just concern about the specific service/need) when a client has specific condition or characteristic (e.g. dementia, frailty or limited mobility)
2. Coordination between services is highly valued, even when there are low resources
3. Access to parks and greenspace is valued and a key service to all (cross-cutting) communities (with accessible play as expected to be highest for Disability)
4. Initial experience of refugees is above average positive, but the lack of clarity about ‘what next’ is the most negative.
5. Skill recognition / translation still is a major block/delay to integration
6. Inconsistency in understanding by managers of neurodivergence and reasonable adjustments
7. Rural communities are missing out more than those in centre Fife on in-person advice e.g. heating etc.

### **Comments/Quotes by service area**

#### **Transport, Local Areas and Community Safety:**

- Parks, green spaces and coastal areas are well maintained, well loved and used – example given was Glenrothes town park and recent renewal of play area.

#### **Health and Social Care:**

- Social care staff are supportive and engaging and understanding when dealing with client with dementia and their family, formed a strong bond which in turn improved support, however individual felt that the staff were limited by resources.

- The way community hospitals help their patients get through their stay and onto the next step of their care.
- Better communication within different departments of FC, such as OT and Social work would result in clients getting the right support sooner and will reduce waiting times. Communication or updates to clients requiring support from social work and OT would also be beneficial as it can be reassuring when someone is waiting on support assessment/equipment.

## **Resettlement:**

- Initial experience of support for the refugees when newly arrived is positive. It would be helpful to have pathways for support clearly communicated with people when the support ends, lowering the impact of insecurities and effect on peoples health.

## **Language and Communication Barriers**

- NHS Fife can add people living and working in Fife to their Photosymbol licence with images and templates for creating Easy Read materials, encouraging more people to learn to create Easy Read copies of the information they share.

## **Employment:**

- It would be helpful if New Scots and migrants in Fife are recognized and valued for their skills and the experience they bring when seeking employment. We hear from a lot of skilled migrants who are seeking work or working at low level jobs as their foreign qualifications are not accepted. This includes jobs we are struggling recruiting for like physiotherapists, dentists, lawyers etc.
- Local charities (e.g. Gingerbread) are successfully helping single parents get practical work experience and parents secured temporary jobs at end of practice. What would help even more is if people can get onto permanent contracts to ensure future financial security.
- The lack of understanding from managers and colleagues on how neurodivergence can present and impact a person can be addressed with targeted campaigns and opportunities for staff development training sessions. Commitment to put in place reasonable adjustments without requirement of official diagnosis will also be useful.

## **Poverty / access to benefits (e.g. winter fuel payments and crisis fund etc):**

- FCE connected National charity Changeworks with several local minorities, rural communities and people in Fife could benefit more from their energy advice and support.

## Discussions about “What do you find difficult or what barriers do you and your community face?”

### Key Themes

1. Official letters with deadlines are often in English – delays in getting translations often have big impacts missed appointments/surgery, payments etc
2. (again) Hearing loops not always available, and if present not always functional – is there a way to organise for HOH to come make audits more often / as routine?
3. Website navigation is not straightforward (Disability – sight impairment, digital literacy), and the current customer service line does not want to answer questions about where to find information there – maybe join up training?
4. Mismatch between qualifications and job openings, main practice of not giving feedback on failed applications is unhelpful to migrants/New Scots still learning the system
5. People becoming homeless/with no funds report accessing support dependent on getting a mobile phone/internet to access, this is not always guaranteed. If having access to a device is too expensive or risky, what alternatives can be shared?

### Language and Communication Barriers:

- Difficulties that language barriers can bring when trying to access GPs, individuals are not aware of the interpreting service NHS Fife uses (*Race, Age*).
- Letters received from services may be in English as opposed to primary language – means missed appointments, payments etc. - example given was letters from housing association (*Race, Age*).
- Lack of hearing loop provision at ONFife venues (*Disability*).
- Lack of physical promotion of local participation opportunities – individual that raised this issue is digitally excluded (*Disability, Age*).
- Fife Council website difficult to navigate.
- There is a lack of information available in BSL formats, specifically when it relates to FC consultations and callouts.
- Being directed towards online materials / resources when phoning for an enquiry – digital exclusion (*Disability, Age*).
- Almost all services and support are accessed online, putting those residents at a disadvantage who don't have access to a computer at home. (*Digital Exclusion*).
- Those requiring support in person, don't feel well-supported at Fife Council offices as they're asked/encouraged to access services online without considering their personal circumstances/disabilities. (*Disability, Age, Digital Exclusion*)

- Lack of empathy in communication with refugees when support provision by FC is coming to an end.
- Lack of support groups, befriending, socialising for people who don't speak English when having long term condition (dementia x2) or in end of life care setting.

## Health and Social Care:

- While staff on the ground were helpful, communications from service(s) are in general were sporadic and caused confusion (*Age*).
- Elderly patients have to download an app to manage NHS and book appointments, meaning they now rely on others to assist as they are digitally excluded (*Age*).
- Patient at hospital have noticed the communication between depts is slow / slowing down. Sometimes it's getting the right equipment to be available and the time it takes that causes delays.
- Worries about lack of local provision of services for the new army bases coming to Leuchars.
- Worries for people who have been diagnosed with either long term or short term health conditions, who do not have the support or companionship to help with isolation due to language barriers.
- General counselling support has long waiting lists, while charities aren't able to support (Charis closed in Nov, due to lack of funding and Talk Matters is closed for referrals).
- Long waiting times from referrals to face-to-face assessments. Clients requiring support wait for a very lengthy period before getting a face-to-face assessment. In one case, a client had mobility aids and equipment installed in her house, but after a house move, she had to go through the referral and assessment process again to get the same equipment installed in the new property. This can be avoided by keeping up-to-date records of clients who've previously accessed OT support, if not done so already.
- Better communication between OT and FC joiners. If an equipment is unsuitable and has been declined by the client, OT should advise the joiners or vice versa, so it doesn't result in wasted resources and appointments. A client had 3 visits from FC joiners to install the same equipment that she had initially refused, resulting in wasted appointments for the joiners and hassle to the client.

## Housing:

- Lack of housing in Fife for refugees placed in hotels, and offers of housing in LA too far to upkeep study/work commitments and established support networks. (*Refugees*)
- Private landlords not accepting people on benefits, which limits even more the options available for Ukrainian refugees whose sponsored accommodation is coming to an end. (*Refugees*)
- The 3 year visas for the Ukrainian refugees will start expiring soon, and people are unsure where they can access support in applying for the 18 month extension (Refugees, Language barrier, digital exclusion)
- Worries about lack of housing provision for the new army bases coming to Leuchars
- FC housing – repairs not being done for long periods of time, ineffective communication, several workmen coming in but establishing different specialism is needed and leaving without the problem being fixed.
- Local young woman begging at supermarket in Dunfermline, currently sofa-surfing and collecting money to buy a phone to get herself support with homeless housing. (concerns about what alternate communication/information means are there for people who are homeless if they don't have a phone). As she's in a vulnerable position she can be taken advantage of.

## Employment:

- Educational Psychologist (migrant) seeking job – several people being trained, but no jobs/funding.
- Asian lady (Housing officer) sharing her experience in career progression & barriers “It's not important what you know and can do, but who you know”.
- Black man sharing his experience of seeking job as a carer and how despite him having high level training and skills receives no feedback for unsuccessful applications to vacancies.
- Neurodivergent adults finding it hard to access reasonable adjustments at work without formal diagnosis. Also lack of understanding from managers and colleagues on how neurodivergence can present and impact a person.
- Fife College Student: Being diagnosed with autism, sometimes people can't accept it especially in hospitality, making it a barrier in employment.

## Transport, Local Areas and Community Safety:

- Difficult for people with learning disabilities when bus timetables were changed.
- Neurodivergent people and those with additional support needs feeling they are not appropriately supported and believed when reporting incidents to the police.

## Community Wellbeing and Belonging :

- Many local charities share difficulties recruiting volunteers to support their service provision.
- People sharing problems with their neighbours through racism.
- People being housed in accommodations in unsafe communities (drug dealing).
- Individual felt that although the parks and greenspaces were maintained to a good standard, they thought that community spaces e.g. local clinics, community centres needed to be refreshed to encourage use.

## Discussions about fairness and equality: “If there was one thing that would make a big improvement for everyone living in Fife, what would it be?”

### Key Themes

1. There is rising demand for more people-led community spaces (i.e. not service delivery) – informal association, non-formal peer to peer
2. Neighbour introduction service or scheme
3. Support / protection for people who come forward to report crime or raise concerns
4. More mentoring schemes to inspire people get into the best career / job they can
5. Cost of transport (cross cutting)

## Community Wellbeing and Belonging:

- More opportunities to connect with their local communities in informal settings without a specific service focus
- Support for those moving home to a different area of Fife to get to know neighbours, individual that raised this felt that because they are a different race it is more difficult to integrate and make new connections in community (*Race*).
- Spaces for people of all ages to integrate and learn more about each other.
- When services are being planned, a representation of people with lived experience to be ensured. (Resettlement planning and delivery currently does not include lived experience reps.)
- More activities and groups within local communities at various times that are available for people with different age ranges, languages and disabilities etc.
- More support for vulnerable people who come forward to report a concern or crime. The service providers to be aware that vulnerable people might first approach with lower-level concern to test the water, and depending on their



experience (if they are made accepted, listened to, believed or not) they may or may not come forward to share bigger and more serious concerns. It's about trust in the service providers and institutions that if managed positively would make our communities better for everyone.

## **Housing:**

- Improved housing provision for those in need (e.g. homeless, released from prison, migrants and refugees etc.)

## **Employment:**

- Career development / apprenticeship schemes – raised by Black & Scot members, many migrants living in Fife are taking any job they can to survive, as opposed to striving for a career in the field they trained for at a higher level.
- More education available on neuro-divergency, so neurodivergent individuals can have equal access to employment opportunities, and the employers have the knowledge and support for those individuals as well.

## **Transport:**

- Cheaper public transport would help everyone.
- Increased number of buses for rural areas.
- Better planning for additional access around new schools and houses.



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## **Section 2:**

# **Open ended conversations about fairness and local equality outcomes (up to 2021-25)**

## **CORE QUESTIONS**

- Do you think these are the right outcomes for Fife Council at this time?
- Do you have any other suggestions?
- What actions do you think can help achieve the current outcomes?

## **Key Themes**

1. Broad agreement with the outcomes, as outlined below
2. Queries about where to find information about actions and updates on those
3. Some disillusionment / disbelief in that 'nothing much can be done'
  - *"The Outcomes seem ok and will hopefully improve things for others, where can I find updates on these as someone outside of the Council? "*
  - *"Makes sense but not holding my breath until I see real actions. "*

## **Comments/Quotes under draft themes:**

### **2.1. Inclusive Communications:**

**"We [Fife Council] will improve how we meet the information and services needs of people unable to 'self-serve' online (in particular: users of community languages, BSL and people with learning difficulties)."**

- *Letters received from services may be in English as opposed to primary language – means missed appointments, payments etc. - example given was letters from housing association (Race, Age).*
- *Lack of hearing loop provision at ONFife venues (Disability).*
- *Fife Council website difficult to navigate.*
- *There is a lack of information available in BSL formats, specifically when it relates to FC consultations and callouts.*

- *Being directed towards online materials / resources when phoning for an enquiry – digital exclusion (Disability, Age).*
- *Lack of empathy in communication with refugees when support provision by FC is coming to an end.*

## 2.2. Engagement and evidence gathering:

**“We [Fife Council] will improve our consultation and engagement exercises through proactive engagement with people from all protected characteristics. By doing this, [we] will also improve our evidence gathering for preparing impact assessments.**

- a. Looking for types of areas people are interested in providing views; what support do they need to provide feedback and perhaps if they are interested in forming a small group which can be ‘trained’ and supported to provide feedback on a regular basis.
- b. Lack of physical promotion of local participation opportunities – individual that raised this issue is digitally excluded (Disability, Age).

## 2.3. Inclusive communities

**We [Fife Council] will support the inclusion of communities in the community wealth building approach by ensuring accessibility of local services and providing opportunities in local decision making.**

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:** What kind of things are people concerned about in their local area? What would make it easier for them to be proud of and contribute to their local area?

## Additional Comments/Quotes

- More opportunities to connect with their local communities in informal settings without a specific service focus
- Support for those moving home to a different area of Fife to get to know neighbours, individual that raised this felt that because they are a different race it is more difficult to integrate and make new connections in community (Race).
- Spaces for people of all ages to integrate and learn more about each other.
- When services are being planned, a representation of people with lived experience to be ensured. (Resettlement planning and delivery currently does not include lived experience reps.)

- More activities and groups within local communities at various times that are available for people with different age ranges, languages and disabilities etc.
- Cheaper public transport.
- Increased number of buses for rural areas.
- Individual felt that although the parks and greenspaces were maintained to a good standard, they thought that community spaces e.g. local clinics, community centres needed to be refreshed to encourage use.

## 2.4. (Working Environment / HR)

### A working environment where inclusion is prioritised and promoted

**“We will improve the working environment within [Fife Council] by hosting regular listening sessions, providing resources and raising awareness of inclusive practice**

### Comments/Quotes from FC staff or partner employability organisations:

- HR have already set out their actions so I suppose you could ask if someone was looking for employment with the Council, would the type of actions listed help them in their employment.  
The lack of understanding from managers and colleagues on how neurodivergence can present and impact a person can be addressed with targeted campaigns and opportunities for staff development training sessions. Commitment to put in place reasonable adjustments without requirement of official diagnosis will also be useful.
- Career development / apprenticeship schemes – raised by Black & Scot members, many migrants living in Fife are taking any job they can to survive, as opposed to striving for a career in their chosen field.
- Similarly, barriers to refugees seeking employment as their home qualifications are usually not accepted in the UK, even when they come with years of practical experience, they are forced to take any job, usually low paid. (we know of 2 lawyers, 2 dentists and a physio therapist – all jobs that can considerably contribute to their communities, but currently can't)

- Cost to work visas and finding a work sponsor also are barriers faced and expressed by migrants.
- Lack of flexibility of workplaces and the need for it are shared for some marginalised groups, mainly new parents, carers, people with disabilities (diagnosed or not), lone parents.

## 2.5 Raising educational achievement and attainment:

**“We [Fife Council] will improve educational achievement, attainment and awareness of cultural heritage of all pupils from protected characteristics in Fife”.**

- A lot of cases of racism still exist in our schools and go under-reported and under-recorded. This leads to barriers to attainment and achievement for people from minority background.
- Similarly, people experience bullying due to their disabilities and additional needs, leading to poorer attainment and achievement, moving schools.
- Some young people are targeted due to their gender or sexual orientation, which also can lead to poorer attainment and achievement.
- Lack of appropriate up-to-date working technology in schools (especially high schools) means student who are digitally excluded and required to use the school's equipment face barriers – have to admit they don't have access to smart phone in front of everyone, and cannot use the school equipment which is outdated and fails to start or connect to the internet.
- Pupils can request netbook for home use (if unable to access one at home) but the council set up isn't user-friendly – all personalisations (like accessible font, letter size, background colours etc) get lost when you shut down the device.

# Let's Chat: Equality Fife

Let's Chat Equality - Fife is our listening ear to everyone who lives, works or studies in Fife to share what is most important and of concern.

You can quickly share feedback through a simple form and FCE will carry out the feedback for you. It is a good opportunity to use your lived experience to change and improve in services for the benefit of everyone in Fife.

We ask:

- What is working well, what is positive, or what is missing that you would like more of?
- What do you find difficult or what barriers do you and your community face?
- If there was one thing that would make a big improvement for everyone living in Fife, what would it be?
- Would you be interested in speaking to us more about your experiences? Please fill in your contact details below.

**Interested in making Fife more equal for everyone?**

Take part online: [Let's Chat: Equality in Fife | FCE](#)

Contact us via:

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- Phone: 01592 645310
- Text: 07800 005834

Meet us in person at any of our events,

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