

To: Leadership Board

On: 19th June 2019

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Tackling Poverty Programme

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the budget meeting on 2nd March 2018, Council agreed the allocation of £5 million over the next 5 years to support a new Tackling Poverty Programme.
 - 1.2 A programme of activity has been developed which sustains key projects which support people on low-incomes, with a focus on low-income families with children.
 - 1.3 The report outlines key progress highlights against the priority areas, covering the last 6 months since the report at Leadership Board on 5th December 2018.
 - 1.4 A Local Child Poverty Action Report has been developed for Renfrewshire to meet the requirements of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Tackling Poverty Programme investment forms a significant part of Renfrewshire's local response to tackling child poverty.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Board:

- Note progress on the delivery of the Tackling Poverty Programme detailed at section 4 of the report.
- Note the development of Renfrewshire's Local Child Poverty Action report at section 5 of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 2 March 2018, Council agreed funding of £5 million over the next 5 years to deliver a tackling poverty programme based on the learning and evaluation of the projects carried out to date and building on the initiatives that have made the most difference in people's lives.
- 3.2 A programme of activity was developed for Year 1 which sustained key projects, supporting people on low incomes, with a focus on low-income families with children.
- 3.3 Progress on the delivery of the Tackling Poverty Programme is reported at Leadership Board on a six-monthly basis.
- 3.4 The report outlines key progress highlights against the priority areas, covering the last 6 months since the report at Leadership Board on 5th December 2018.
- 3.5 A Local Child Poverty Action Report has been developed for Renfrewshire to meet the requirements of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Tackling Poverty Programme investment forms a significant part of Renfrewshire's local response to tackling child poverty.

4. Progress

- 4.1 Since the introduction of the Tackling Poverty programme, there have been a significant number of projects and developments undertaken across the Council and its partners to tackle poverty.

In addition to this, over the next 4 years the Tackling Poverty Programme will continue to provide investment to specific initiatives that support the Council's aspiration to tackle poverty.

The initiatives support three key priorities;

- Targeting support to families that need it the most
- Removing barriers to participation for children and young people
- Supporting health and wellbeing for young people

Targeting support to families that need it most – £0.79 million

- The three Families First locality teams funded by the Tackling Poverty Programme in Foxbar, Gallowhill and Johnstone continue to offer early years and family support services, including targeted financial advice and parenting support. These three localities have worked with over 880 families and generated £3.3 million of income since their introduction.
- The Healthier, Wealthier Children service provides targeted advice and support to new and expectant parents on managing changes to finances and supporting them to claim benefits they are entitled to. This service has been successful in achieving significant financial gains of over £3.4m for over 1660 households during this key life event.
- Energy Advice continues to be offered to people who need support to reduce their energy bills, manage fuel debt and improve the energy efficiency in their homes. This project has worked with over 3,400 households to date, saving a total of over £1m on energy costs.
- Over the last year the Foodbank continued to support clients who needed emergency food due to benefit changes and delays and low income. They fulfilled 5,703 vouchers this year, a rise of 14% on last year. The Foodbank provided food supplies for 7,373 adults and 2,818 children, a rise of 17%.
- Support to Renfrewshire's Citizens Advice Bureau to provide the Advice Renfrewshire phoneline service continues. This free, confidential and independent service provides a single gateway to a wide range of advice for citizens, including benefits, money and emergency advice. Over the last year the service provided phone assistance to almost 300 clients and there were 4.1k sessions recorded on the Advice Renfrewshire website.
- Working in partnership with The STAR project the new Community Fridge initiative was launched on 12th March. Since then this initiative has supported 127 individuals and over 200kg of food has been donated.
- Supporting the Council's Digital strategy, work continues to make sure those who are most at risk of being digitally excluded are supported to develop digital skills and get online. Working in partnership with ROAR this initiative specifically targets older adults and people with a disability.

4.3 Removing barriers to participation for children and young people- £0.34 million

Another key way Councils can mitigate the effects of child poverty is to remove the barriers to participation and opportunities that exist for children and young people living in poverty. In addition, we have a number a number of projects which achieve this by removing both the direct and indirect costs associated with participating in educational, cultural and sports activities.

- Morning clubs continue in 10 schools, providing a healthy breakfast to all pupils universally within participating schools. Over 250,000 free healthy breakfasts have been served since the introduction of this project, relieving financial pressure on low income families, but most importantly, making sure that children start the school day ready to learn.
- The Cost of the School Day fund continues to operate across all primary and secondary schools in Renfrewshire, directly supporting families in a variety of ways including uniforms, food, transport, extra-curricular activities and curricular expenses.
- The programme continues to provide Street stuff activities during the holidays and at weekends, along with the provision of free healthy food to support key activities. Over 26,000 attendances have been recorded to date. At the recent Spring holiday clubs which were held over a two-week period, there were 675 attendances and 278 individuals recorded. Preparations are now underway to plan for the summer camps.
- The programme continues to support the delivery of the Skoobmobile which introduces children to the benefit of reading and play and supports the Council's ambitions to narrow the literacy attainment gap.

4.4 Supporting health and wellbeing for young people - £0.16 million

In addition to supporting participation, the programme also contains projects which support the health and wellbeing of young people across Renfrewshire, recognising both the importance of supporting youth mental health, but also that health inequalities are strongly socially patterned as well. Youth mental health has been identified by young people as a key issue, and this now features in both the Council Plan and Community Plan as a key priority.

- The peer health project will continue in partnership with Active Communities, working with young people in all secondary schools

across Renfrewshire to identify key health priorities in their school and developing young people to lead their own activities to improve health and wellbeing. There are now 348 peer educators that have been trained across Renfrewshire schools, who have engaged with over 5,000 pupils in total on a range of health issues such as mental health, diet, alcohol and drugs. Peer Educators are currently working towards Saltire Awards and SQA awards in wellbeing, personal development, volunteering and mental health.

- School counselling is embedded across all 11 secondary schools, and an additional service has been established in Mary Russell. The service offers 1:1 and groupwork support to young people on a range of issues such as anxiety, stress, bereavement and loss, family issues and self-esteem. An emotional literacy group has now been delivered within Park Mains and Johnstone High School and moving forward this will be delivered within Linwood and Renfrewshire High School.

5. Child Poverty Action Report

- 5.1 A Local Child Poverty Action Report has been developed for Renfrewshire to meet the requirements of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Tackling Poverty Programme investment forms a significant part of Renfrewshire's local response to tackling child poverty.
- 5.2 The Local Child Poverty Action report will be presented to Leadership Board as a separate paper at the meeting on 19th June 2019.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The £5 million allocated to the delivery of the Tackling Poverty Programme was agreed in the Council budget agreed on 2nd March 2018. Thereafter on 20th June 2018, Leadership Board approved the allocation of funding for Year 1 of the programme.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The programme continues to support the key priorities set out in the Council and Community Plan to tackle inequality and widen opportunity.
4. **Legal** – Not applicable

5. **Property/Assets** – Not applicable
 6. **Information Technology** – Not applicable
 7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The projects within the programme are likely to have a positive impact on quality and human rights, particularly considering the overrepresentation of equality groups in low income households.
 8. **Health & Safety** – Not applicable.
 9. **Procurement** – The extension of some projects within the Tackling Poverty Programme may have procurement implications, where for example, contracts are coming to an end and may need to go through procurement processes again.
 10. **Risk** – Not applicable
 11. **Privacy Impact** - Not applicable
 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – Not applicable
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List of Background Papers

- (a) Not applicable
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Author: Allyson Blue, Programme Manager. Tel No. 07786 682911